UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

THE SOCIAL DIALECTIC IN GEORG KAISER'S DRAMATIC WORKS

MOSES JOSEPH FRUCHTER

A THESIS

IN GERMANICS

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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From a letter from Georg Kaiser:

"Ihren Brief habe ich mit grossem Interesse gelesen. Das Thema ist richtig gestellt. Bisher ist mit dieser Prägnanz noch keine Arbeit über mein Werk in Deutschland erschienen."

Dated April 17, 1931.

AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT

No words can adequately express the sense of gratitude felt by the author of this dissertation for the generosity of attitude accorded him by Professors Daniel B. Shumway and Ernst Jockers in the course of his work.

To Doctor Jockers, under whose direct guidance this work was conceived, the author wishes to give thanks for his ever-ready interest, his wise and inspiring counsel and his liberally rendered assistance which are chiefly responsible for whatever merit this investigation may possess.

PART ONE
THEORETICAL CONSIDERATION
The Foundation of Kaiser's Dialectical Philosophy of Life; Its Ethical Character

CHAPTER ONE
THESIS AND ANTITHESIS

Georg Kaiser's amazing productivity has been subject to some speculation and much comment. He has been called a man of scattered interests, a kind of literary Janus, a dramatic juggler, a skilful craftsman with a nose for the possibilities of the stage, a dealer in problems, an eccentric stylist, a dramatic mechanic, a cinematographic author. In short, a playwright whose enormously prolific output bore witness to the fact that birth was not connected with great spiritual pain. Thus various negative critics have represented him as deficient in what is doubtless the most essential element of all significant literature, namely true human warmth, sincere interest in human life, consequently as lacking in poetry, in lyricism; above all, the harshest of indictments, as lacking in a central philosophy of life, a definite attitude to the problems of existence.

In this spirit Riemann [1] not only considers Kaiser's work as unworthy of serious attention, but actually has the audacity to attack and malign the dramatist personally as one who is ". . . ein erblich schwer belasteter Neurastheniker, der sich dazu in Buenos Aires eine Malaria holte, deren Nachwirkungen er nie verwand . . ." and to allude to Kaiser's trial with the malicious eagerness of a scandal-monger.

Von der Leyen, though with less venom, still refers to the author's "menschliche Gebrechen" [1] and in speaking of his work has little to say in the dramatist's favor:

"Er drapierte sich geschickt in vielen Gewandungen, die er grösseren Meistern entlieh, gierig nach dem grossen Erfolg, ohne innere Festigkeit

[1] Robert Riemann, "Von Goethe zum Expressionismus," p. 430 ff.
[1] Friedrich von der Leyen, "Deutsche Dichtung in neuer Zeit," pp. 259-260.

und ohne die echten Weihen . . . weil die wirklichen Menschen der Handlung fehlen, ist sie seelenlos . . . Alles ist errechnete kalte Leidenschaft, ohne innere Glut . . . nicht der Ausdruck eines tiefen Verlangens . . . die innere Spannung fehlt, der Gegensatz von innerer und äusserer Spannung fehlt erst recht . . . am Ende fühlt man sich nur gemartert und leer . . ."

In a similar vein writes Mahrholz: [2]

Kaiser "schafft nicht aus der Tiefe eines einheitlichen Menschentums, sondern er ist selber der Zivilisation und ihrer Entseelung verfallen . . . alles bleibt bei Kaiser flach, ein Klischee, ohne Transzendenz . . . das dürre Gerippe des schriftstellerischen Denkens . . . ein ausgeklügeltes Spiel, ein Widerspiel von mathematischen Formeln . . . Seine Sprache ist unlyrisch, gegenständlich, tatsächlich, knapp, ja, brutal."

And he summarizes his estimate as follows:

"So also lässt sich das Bild Kaisers umreissen: der grösste Theatraliker, der schärfste Dialektiker des modernen Theaters, ein Denkspieler vielleicht, aber kein Dichter, kein Schöpfer, kein Mensch, der aus fruchtbarer Mitte heraus Glauben, Utopie, Zukunft, Menschenbild, entstehen lässt. Seine Zivilisationskritik ist echt und leidenschaftlich, sein Pathos der Zukunft aber leer und verzweifelt. Das echte Wahrzeichen des Dichters: Gefühl für Organisches ist ihm nicht gegönnt."

And Julius Bab says: [1]

"Denn ob es etwas wie eine zentrale menschliche Leidenschaft in diesem unermüdlichen Spieler überhaupt gibt, ist eine sehr schwer zu beantwortende Frage."

Bernhard Diebold,[2] who has occupied himself considerably with Kaiser's work, is still motivated by the same negative spirit. Although willing to admit Kaiser's technical mastery, he asserts:

"Aber diesen virtuosen Stücken fehlt doch die Seelensubstanz . . ." [3]

Or again:

"Georg Kaiser, der nur im seltensten Fall in die Erscheinung seiner Werke auch das Bekennthis seiner Seele betten will; und auf die Konse-

[2] Werner Mahrholz, "Deutsche Literatur der Gegenwart," p. 411 ff.
[1] "Die Chronik des Deutschen Dramas", p. 118.
[2] "Der Denkspieler Georg Kaiser."
[3] ibid., p. 114.

quenz einer geistigen Persönlichkeit zugunsten seiner technischen Zauberkunst kalt verzichtet . . ." [1]

He describes Kaiser's work as

". . . ein buntes Karussell mit schaukelnden Figuren." [2]

In Kaiser's multiform work Diebold considers himself unable to detect an underlying unity; neither the unity of a philosophy nor that of a poetic personality.[3] He charges Kaiser with lack of ethical consistency whereby his belief in the dramatist's poetic conviction is deeply shaken.[4] And although he denies Kaiser insight into the really profound veracities of life, what he terms "die tiefsten Inhalte," [5] Diebold paradoxically enough does not wish to appear to condemn or even to judge the author on the basis of these criticisms. On the contrary, he is anxious to have it understood that in stating these facts he aims to act as unbiased interpreter, not as judge. For all this falls within Diebold's theory that Kaiser's work is held together by what he pleases to term Kaiser's technical personality.[6] This technical personality is at the source of his unique reasoning method and of his dramatic technique:[7]

"Da diese Einheit noch nicht leicht in einer Harmonie der Geistessphäre, geschweige in der rätselhaften Persönlichkeit des Dichters aufgefunden werden kann, so müssen wir sie in der einzigartigen Denk-Methodik und in der dichterischen Szenik anerkennen: in einer 'technischen Persönlichkeit.'"

And in another place he epitomizes his analysis of Kaiser in the following brief statement:[8]

". . . stärker als das Fühlen aus einem seelischen Zentrum herrscht über Kaiser's Werk das vielgestaltende Denken."

In other critics a more generous attitude to Kaiser's work may be observed. Nevertheless one cannot liberate himself from the

[1] "Der Denkspieler Georg Kaiser", p. 135.
[2] ibid., p. 6.
[3] ibid., p. 6.
[4] ibid., p. 10.
[5] ibid., p. 115.
[6] ibid., p. 7.
[7] ibid., pp. 6-7.
[8] ibid., p. 13.

feeling that they give praise in cautious words tinged with frigid reserve. This certainly is true in the case of Naumann [1] in spite of his admiration for Kaiser's "Die Bürger von Calais" and also of Stammler,[2] in whose assertion:

"Vergebens sucht man bei ihm nach eingehender seelischer Motivierung." [3]

one perceives a note of regret in spite of his endeavor to interpret this condition on the basis of the character of the work. And finally one also carries away a similar impression from Albert Soergel's earnest attempt to present a just and objective picture of Kaiser's work. For in the last analysis Soergel proves to be full of hesitations: [4]

"Denn alle diese Visionen sieht man von keiner Grundvision von einem neuen Menschen aus gestaltet. Wohin der neue Mensch Georg Kaiser's wirklich endgültig zielt, weiss man nicht. Dieses Schwanken, das wie ein lediglich geschicktes technisches Verwerten von mehr oder minder klaren sehnsüchtigen Gefühlen aussieht, die die Zeit erfüllen, hat ihm den Namen eines Sudermann des Expressionismus eingetragen."

The denial of a central philosophy of life which seems to be the upshot of these criticisms must be considered the gravest of possible charges. To have no definite philosophy of life is to have no form, no soul. For soul is nothing but what James Joyce terms it in *"Ulysses,"* the form of forms. Consequently to be found guilty of this charge is to be formless, inconsequential, of no significance whatever.

In the face of the problem of Kaiser's prolific literary output, purely from the external aspect of the matter and without inner evidence from his work, obviously the thought suggests itself that:

1. Kaiser's works did not flow from a deeply unified conception of life; since to express a profound and crystallized philosophy superproductivity would be anomalous, shallow, superfluous, and

[1] Hans Naumann, "Die Deutsche Dichtung der Gegenwart."
[2] Wolfgang Stammler, "Deutsche Literatur vom Naturalismus bis zur Gegenwart."
[3] ibid., p. 108.
[4] Albert Soergel, "Dichtung und Dichter der Zeit," p. 683.

2. That consequently Kaiser must be a man of many themes which are perhaps only feebly connected by a common thread of whatever nature: style, mannerism or what not.

Such contentions are, to be sure, in part correct. Single instances may be brought to illustrate and qualify these judgments. But as a generally applicable dictum such a criticism would be exaggerated and entirely unjust.

It is not the chief purpose of this study to take up the cudgel for Kaiser against his critics, to contradict and offset in lengthy polemics certain adverse opinions, especially since this would prove to be a superfluous and belated task after the fine appreciative considerations of Kaiser's work such as those by Freyhan [1] and Koenigsgarten,[2] for instance. It is much more important to prove by positive results, as this investigation aims to do, in the first place, that within the apparent diversity Kaiser shows clearly singleness of purpose, and secondly, that, with rare exceptions, his works point to a definite philosophy of life underlying the treatment of each theme, no matter how widely separated some of them may appear. Thus perhaps it will be possible to throw some light from a new angle upon the fascinating art of this brilliant modern dramatist and to penetrate to the core of his art by an examination of the various phases of his philosophy.

Bearing in mind that it was left to Expressionism to pierce through the individual to the social conscience, and having accepted the generally undisputed classification of Kaiser as an expressionist, nothing remains more logical than the choice of what must be the most typical and essential in his work: man's conscience or the ethical theme.

In an article by Georg Kaiser entitled *"Dichtung und Energie"* [3] one finds certain theoretical utterances which are strongly self-revelatory. In it Kaiser appears pre-eminently as the apostle of Platonic perfectionism positing the proposition that happiness consists in a harmonious development of all human faculties, and

[1] Max Freyhan, "Georg Kaiser's Werk."
[2] Hugo F. Koenigsgarten, "Georg Kaiser."
[3] Publ. in "Hannoverscher Anzeiger," April 9, 1922, under the title, "Der kommende, Mensch," and later as "Dichtung und Energie" in "Berliner Tageblatt," and reprinted in "The English Review," v. 35, pp. 533-7, 1922.

that the root of all social evil lies in society's frustration of this effort.

"Man," he says, "is perfect from the very beginning. He is, so to speak, a finished product from the very moment of his birth. The limitations to which he finally succumbs are not part of his inner nature," but "imposed upon him from without, as a result of the distorted forms to which his destiny is subjected."

This sounds like the familiar voice of Rousseau. It exonerates the individual from guilt in his own fate and places the burden of responsibility upon the faulty social organization which forces him from the straight path, predestined by Nature, into fatal maladjustments. The problem of guilt and responsibility here touched upon in a cursory manner will be treated again, more fully, at a later stage, as one of the crucial moral interests in Kaiser's social system. The tragedy of the individual who is designed by Nature to lead a harmonious life, consists in the fact that the individual is thrown off his course and that he is condemned—living within an unnatural scheme of things—to a slow and inexorable corrosion of his creative powers which leaves no hope of personal happiness.

Thus we can conceive of the tragedy of thwarted faculties of life of the Millionaire in *"Koralle,"* of the Cashier in *"Von Morgens bis Mitternachts,"* of Krehler in *"Kanzlist Krehler"*; such is the tragedy of chained existence and imprisoned instincts of life in *"Noli me tangere."* This is also one of the problems, if not the dominant problem in a series of other plays.

Against this crippling of life the victims of this tragic fate revolt: the Cashier doomed to the deadening monotony of counting bills behind the barred window of his cage; Krehler whose whole course of life consists in the inanimate routine of office work; the Millionaire who is horrified by the misery and the degradation which are to him synonymous with poverty. And in this unequal struggle they are doomed to inevitable crushing defeat. For opposing them is a world-system blind and deaf to the outcries, to the unutterable longings of wounded souls. From the constricting grip of this mechanized, unfeeling, fixed world-

system there appears to be no escape, save—in death. It clutches man with a machine's iron teeth and there is no return.

To understand Kaiser's condemnation of present-day society, it is necessary to recognize that at the very foundation of his ethical system lies *the principle of the individual's positive moral obligation in relation to society.* This concept works itself slowly through his comedies and rises to the height of clarity and conviction in his social dramas. It is caricatured as an aberration in *"Konstantin Strobel"*; its distorted forms are satirized from varying aspects in *"Die Versuchung," "Der Geist der Antike," "Der Präsident"*; it is treated from a peculiar angle in *"Claudius."* It manifests itself with growing force of belief in the Sixteenth Prisoner of *"Noli me tangere,"* the Captain of *"Gats,"* the Millionaire's descendants in the *"Koralle"—"Gas"* cycle, in the luminous figures of the Pawnbroker in *"Nebeneinander"*, Spazierer in *"Hölle, Weg, Erde"*, Eustache in *"Die Bürger von Calais"*.

This consciousness of moral responsibility, carried a step further, becomes *the sense of individual guilt,* inherited by each through the mere act of belonging to the common body of humanity, the sense of guilt from which none can be exempted. This thought is given expression most emphatically in *"Nebeneinander"* and *"Hölle, Weg, Erde"*, but it can be seen in its embryonic stage of development already as early as *"Rektor Kleist"*, in the figure of Kornmüller. These ideas are aspects of what may be termed Kaiser's *dynamic conception of social ethics.*

If society is a collective body composed of individuals, the whole cannot transcend its units of composition. This is one of the strongest tenets of Kaiser's moral philosophy. As in Greek tragedy, man bears upon his shoulders the guilt in the commission of which he may have had no definitely direct part. But what in Greek tragedy was the sin of the fathers, a fatalistic curse, becomes in Kaiser the sin of society, consequently an outgrowth of human factors and thus controllable by force of reason. The transcendent divine force of Greek tragedy is in Kaiser devoid of any theological or metaphysical connotation; it is the recognition of the universality of man and of the interdependence of

individuals on the one hand, and the individual and society on the other.

The antithesis to Kaiser's ideal of a *positive ethics* is contained in the *negative moral principles* of present society. According to Kaiser, human misery and suffering is due to this absence of a social sense of responsibility on the part of the individual, either because of a lack of understanding, or because of hard-heartedness, callousness, selfish indifference to the rights and interests of others—the great sin of present-day society, the only great immorality.

This immorality, however, is the officially sanctioned practice of modern society. Organized society does not recognize the great moral *crime of omission.* It punishes and defends exclusively against certain forms of positive criminal offences. Perpetration of a damaging act against another individual is a crime, but to stand by indifferently and suffer your next to perish without the slightest attempt to intercede, to assist—is legal. Therein consists the antithesis of the ethical code of the state to the positive dynamic morality of the coming humanity, of the *New Man.*

Present social morality is negative in its very foundation and in its principles. It is legalistic, a slave to formalism, it grows out of an attitude of personal indifferentism which by force of its very nature is inimical to any urge of social progress. It even stifles such attempts at their roots by legislative obstacles, it resists them by means of every form of discouragement and ridicule. It is inhibitive. It frustrates the striving of the really ethical individuals (in the positive, the only true sense of dynamic ethics), thereby not only destroying personal happiness, but actually preventing the advent of the New Generation.

As early as in the play, *"Die jüdische Witwe,"* Kaiser exposes this negative spirit against which Judith attempts to assert her natural human rights, but it is not until the later plays, especially in *"Nebeneinander"* and in *"Hölle, Weg, Erde",* that this thought finds its fullest expression. In these two dramas the dialectic clash between the negative ethics of society and the dynamic conception of ethics of the New Man is portrayed vividly through the encounters between the Pawnbroker and Spazierer and the various forms of organized society.

The Pawnbroker, conscious of his mission to save a human life and forgetful of his own difficulties with the authorities, presents his case to the Police Commissioner in the fourth act. What a helpless individual is unable to accomplish, certainly organized society has the resources to do:

"Mit—ganzem Apparat der Polizei!! Recherchen von Umfang, die alles in Anspruch nehmen: Telephon—Telegraph!! Recherche nach Lu!! Voller Alarm!! Wo ist Lu? Es wird alles ohne Sinn, wenn nicht alles jederzeit bereit ist, um einem einzigen Menschen das Leben zu retten ! ! ! . . . Der Zufall wächst in riesigen Zwang—hier ist nun jeder verpflichtet!!—Ich bin ein hilfloser Einzelner, meine Mittel leisten es nicht—spielend bewältigt den Aufwand die Polizei. Mit Verzweigung über Stadt und Dorf."

And characteristic is the reply of the Commissioner in the form of a question addressed to the Pawnbroker's daughter:

"Ist Ihr Vater schon interniert gewesen? Irrenanstalt?"

And having comprehended that his appeal was useless, the Pawnbroker utters his bitter denunciation:

"Es wird Himmel und Hölle in Bewegung gesetzt um einen gestohlenen Teppich—um ein Fahrrad—tausend Telephone schnurren: haltet den Dieb! Hier schreit ein fieberndes Wesen nach Hilfe aus Not und Tod—Sie kramen den Schreibtisch um—und schnappen die Witze der zwei albernen Kavaliere?"

The situation in *"Hölle, Weg, Erde"* is practically identical. But here the atmosphere is recreated more adroitly and much more poignantly. The feelingless, impersonal, indifferent machine of justice works like an automaton. The phraseology of the Lieutenant of the Guards is never varied. Procedure clicks with the precision and the monotony of a clock. It never sways from its course of routine.

According to Kaiser a new world can be created, the regeneration of humanity can be brought about only by a transvaluation of moral values from a static and negative to a positive and dynamic force. To make morality the true Messiah of a new and happy form of existence, it must crush the top-crust of sterility and stereotypy and become natural and positive. Not

until then can it become a progressive and enriching force. Such is Kaiser's ethical postulate sine qua non. And with it as a starting point he proceeds to evolve his idea of the New Man.

In the search for broad principles as a preliminary step to the comprehensive study of Kaiser's work, it has been established thus far, that man is born with a faculty for happy existence, if the natural development of his harmonious life is not thwarted by an inimical environment. It was next found, that the present mechanical age is actuated by a chilling, negative spirit to which we may allude by the general term of negative morality. The next question is: How will man motivated by an unconscious or conscious desire to realize his self and frustrated in his urge for happiness by the spirit and organization of society, attempt to solve his problem?

Three ways may be mentioned in this connection:

(a) The Primitive Solution: following the urge of instinct for self-realization.

(b) The Way of Escape (The Romantic Solution).

1—into irony
2—into dream
3—into adventure and crime
4—into death

(c) The Way of Reformation: the ethical solution.

How does Kaiser attack each of these solutions? The second part of this study will concern itself in greater detail with the above problems. At this point let is suffice to say that Kaiser is incessantly aware of the clashing interests of the individual and the world in which he lives and that he conceives of it as a dialectical encounter of hostile forces. At one stage this struggle takes the form of the instinctive revolt of a Judith in *"Die jüdische Witwe"* or the daughter of King Agenor in *"Europa"* whose actions are motivated by the urge of strong impulses to realize themselves, to attain what is to them the totality of life, though the struggle may never reach the level of conscious action.

Again we find that the problem of escape is to Kaiser an ever-fascinating subject and though it admits of many possibilities, it means principally: escape from reality into the world of unreality, the world of illusion, a realm where imagination and reality blend into one and become indistinguishable. To Kaiser's dynamic temper life itself is the restless motion of escape. From what? And in what form? In *"Der Geist der Antike"* Nehrkorn escapes from the dusty world of unproductive science into an attitude of irony, secludes himself in his study to produce a mousetrap which he considers a greater contribution to humanity than the unearthing of relics of antiquity. The Millionaire in *"Koralle"* escapes from the harrowing recollection of misery into a dream of happiness in which he exchanges personalities with the Secretary in order to partake of the happy memory of the latter's childhood. In *"König Hahnrei"* Marke forces himself to believe in a dream-like state of affairs in which there is no faithfulness and disloyalty. Oliver in *"Zweimal Oliver"* escapes from an impossible existence into insanity which is to him the world of dream. And not only individuals, a whole group embraces the consoling vistas of dream as is the case in the magnificent scene at the beginning of Act Two of *"Gas II"* where Girl, Young Worker, Man, Woman, Old Man and Old Woman are merely the voices expressing symbolically the dreams of the groups for which they stand. Or it may be escape from the automaton's existence of the Cashier in *"Von Morgens bis Mitternachts"* or from the joyless drudgery of Krehler's office in *"Kanzlist Krehler"* into a brief career of adventure and crime doomed to a disastrous end. Or as in *"Koralle"* again, at a later stage and likewise in the last stages of *"Von Morgens bis Mitternachts"*, *"Kanzlist Krehler"*, or in *"Das Frauenopfer"*, *"Juana"*, *"Der Brand im Opernhaus"*, *"Nebeneinander"*, *"Die Lederköpfe"*, *"Mississipi"* or in the novel *"Es ist genug"* escape leads to that last resort of the romantic soul, death—the eternal isle of peace where all insoluble problems find their solutions.

Had Kaiser stopped with the problem of escape, he would have undoubtedly become a neo-romantic dramatist, but since he has gone beyond this and advanced to other solutions, we

can at best say that he displays elements in common with romantic literature.

The problem of reformation also allows of more than one possibility. Shall it be reform of society from without, through revolutionary, political, economic, or sociological methods? Kaiser lets these methods work themselves out to prove their inefficacy, especially in the great social trilogy *"Koralle"—"Gas I"—"Gas II"*. Shall it then be reformation from within, through the human unit of society? Shall society be salvaged through a new generation of men? To this he seems to answer in the affirmative.

The next question is: From what sources of personality flow the ideas comprising Georg Kaiser's world-view? Who is the man behind this ethical system? What are his natural endowments? What experiences have influenced the course of his mental evolution, the result and sum total of which his works represent? These problems naturally suggest themselves to one who is attempting to arrive at an understanding of Kaiser's works. For as various students of letters have said, literature represents the spiritual adventures of a personality. To divorce a work from its author is to cut it off from its source. A complete comprehension must be a conception which allows the identification of the man with the work, a unification of cause and result in a harmonious entity.

In the case of Kaiser this is admittedly a difficult enterprise. There is scarcely another modern author of the same calibre concerning whose life so little is known. This is due primarily to the man's reluctance to speak of himself, to his strong disinclination to give of his intimate life to the large public, to his complete and consistent avoidance of the floodlights in the warmth of which many lesser literary personalities delight in basking.

In an autobiographical note[1] of characteristic brevity Kaiser informs us that he was born in Magdeburg on November 25, 1878, next to the youngest of six brothers, in the family of the

[1] "Das Literarische Echo," v. 20, c. 6; p. 319; Dec. 15, 1917.

merchant Friedrich Kaiser. He attended school at a convent, but retained unpleasant memories of it. For three years he tried business. Another three he spent in Buenos Aires. The climate brought on illness and he returned to Germany through Spain and Italy. He established himself once more in Magdeburg. At the age of twenty-five he wrote his first work *"Rektor Kleist"* which he calls "eine Tragikomödie von Krankheit und Verlangen". In 1908 he married and settled in Seeheim an der Bergstrasse. Three years later he acquired a winter-house in historic Weimar.

From other sources we know that subsequently he lived in Munich, in Tutzing and that at present he resides in rustic Grünheide (Mark) on the quiet shore of a lake. He spends much of his time on the education of his three children and leads an otherwise rather isolated existence, rarely troubling to attend even the premieres of his own plays. He is not a man of books, but as befits the author of the expression "Das Wort tötet das Leben", he is an enemy of all literature.

Kaiser is a man of many paradoxes. He is known to have been literally starving while maintaining a luxurious villa in Tutzing, to have subscribed 20,000 marks to a Landauer memorial when he was practically penniless, to have used up princely incomes on the payment of enormous debts. His personal habits are of the most modest. In practical affairs the acute literary logician is no more than a child.

The greatest of paradoxes however in the life of this man was the notorious trial of February 1921, the details of which are shrouded in mystery by all of his commentators. From the obscure allusions one is in a position to gather that Kaiser was involved in a civil suit concerning embezzlement and that after his most extraordinary defensive utterances he was found guilty and sentenced to a term in prison.

This unfortunate incident has been cited in support of the contention that Kaiser is lacking in sincerity. For how else could one explain the fact that a literary idealist is capable of such a transgression? Simply a case of an unprincipled charlatan, the critic argues to his own satisfaction.

In the play *"Noli me tangere"* one finds traces of the sad experience.[1] This is perhaps the only instance where Kaiser draws partly upon the events of his own life to produce a literary work. And even here one can hardly detect anything approximating a recount of tangible events. The play is replete with vague symbolism, submerged in a rarefied, spiritual atmosphere in which reality as it is known to us fades away into distance, loses itself among disembodied reflections and the spasmic, cryptical utterances of a mind which envisions life in concentrated symbolical hieroglyphics.

The connection between Kaiser's life and works must therefore be sought not in the ordinary experiences and adventures of the man, but rather in the manifestations of his spiritual structure which influences his personal life as well as the works which he has created. The scant facts known about him may be of aid in the recognition of this relation.

First the incident of the trial. Behind it, to one familiar with the reasoning of Kaiser and his theory of ethics, it becomes at once and convincingly clear that for Kaiser there can be no question of a law which must be rigidly enforced under all circumstances and in relation to all. As we have seen, morality is for Kaiser a dynamic changing conception. Its codification by the state into rigid laws is antagonistic to its essentially flexible character. Law cannot be absolute, absolutely right. If it is to be human (and it should be), it must be relative. As a result, one cannot condemn a man for a transgression the motivation of which was flowing from just principles or justifying aims. In accordance with this view he considers his trial an "exorbitant case" and exclaims: "Ich muss meine Kinder schlachten können, wenn ich an mich glaube". Torn between the illusory world of Utopian ethics and the commonplace actualities of the trial he stood in the courtroom, a pathetic and eccentric figure, as Soergel describes him:[1]

". . . ein Mensch wie Spruch und Widerspruch, jetzt emporgereckt, jetzt gesunken, jetzt auf der Lippe das flehende Wort: 'Tut dem Geist nicht zu weh, denn Geist ist schon eine unheilbare Wunde.'"

[1] See especially pp. 69-71.

[1] "Dichtung und Dichter der Zeit," p. 663.

To be sure such reasoning as this is hazardous. It does not safeguard society against the menace of fallacious judgment on the part of a fanatic or a monomaniac. But Kaiser provides against this objection by resorting to Nietzsche's superman who is exempted from the shortcomings of ordinary humanity. For it is nothing else when he speaks of his exceptional case or when he says: "Ich bin ein Grosser, folglich darf ich klein sein." [1]

No less revealing in the face of Kaiser's frequent allusions to escape is his life of a recluse in the quiet surroundings of his home. Away from the din and fret of great centres he lives his retired existence, contemplating from his seclusion the spectacle of life flashing before him in a kaleidoscopic whirl. That is why he is often able to detach himself, and write of men who suddenly awaken to the realization that what had appeared to them to be life itself was merely life's phantom, merely an external relation, mere surface. And then they are suddenly capable of severing all relations, burning their bridges, destroying all of what had been life to them, to seek the mirage of a different life, the mirage they had suddenly come to behold within themselves, the strange poetry of spiritual adventure. It is thus that Kaiser understands the detachment of a man from the common realities of existence which all at once become insignificant and unbearable.

In the light of this it should not be difficult to comprehend why Kaiser should make large gifts of money, irrespective of his needs. To him who has so often in his plays spoken of the evil influence of money, to whom money represents but yellow destructive gas capable of ruining the world, it is just another of the many actualities of life which should be of no positive importance. One must think in this connection of the Cashier in *"Von Morgens bis Mitternachts"*, of Oliver in *"Zweimal Oliver"*, of Jean in *"Zwei Krawatten"* who having come into possession of what to them are enormous sums of money, recognize the utter hopelessness of procuring happiness through wealth and literally throw it away with their hands or like the last-mentioned run away from it. The thing alone that matters is the inner man. Kaiser is the poet of the inner life.

[1] See Diebold: "Der Denkspieler Georg Kaiser," p. 31.

Yet Kaiser is not one who like the Romanticists negates the world and escapes from it without facing it, indeed afraid to think of it, but rather one who recognizes its gigantic forces, takes them into account and wishes to order them in such a fashion that they should no longer interfere with man's realization of the purpose: to live a full life in harmony with one's inner tendencies within a world that favors and fosters the inner urge to totality of life and places no obstacles in the way of its achievement.

From these few cursory remarks it becomes obvious that Kaiser's personality reveals the same traits which characterize his plays, and that both display the same ideational tendencies: the negation of the physical structure of present-day society exemplified by the negation of the power of money as the symbol of a materialistic age and the negation of its ethical character exemplified by the conflict of moral principles brought out during his trial and its motivation. Secondly, the desire to escape from the realities of an imperfect world, and finally the urge for an inner orientation as opposed to the solution of active combat of the social structure by participation in the strife of factions.

From what has been said thus far, it seems clear that both Kaiser's life and work are demonstrations of the idea of polarity which actuates his thought-processes. He conceives of the world as a great battle-ground of two constantly clashing, uneven forces, society and the individual. It is an eternal struggle and goes on wherever an individual is confronted with a social group and endeavors to live his own life according to the laws of his nature. The group, whatever its form, intent upon the preservation of the status quo, is ever the deadly antagonist of the dynamic individual. Whether it is the conflict between Judith in *"Die jüdische Witwe"* and a devitalized, impotent patriarchal group in Biblical times, or the similar struggle of Europa in a mythical land; whether it is the strife of Socrates against a society given to the cult of body to the exclusion of the mind in the play *"Der gerettete Alkibiades"*, or in *"Der Geist der Antike"* the reverse problem of Nehrkorn satirizing an over-intellectual-

ized age; George Sand in *"Die Flucht nach Venedig"* battling what she considers moral prejudices in the field of erotics; Eustache de Saint-Pierre in *"Die Bürger von Calais"* fighting for his pacifistic principles against a military code of honor; the Cashier in *"Von Morgens bis Mitternachts,"* Krehler in *"Kanzlist Krehler"*, the Captain in *"Gats"*, the Pawnbroker in *"Nebeneinander"*, Spazierer in *"Hölle, Weg, Erde"*, the descendants of the Millionaire in *"Koralle"—"Gas"* struggling against the various phases of present-day civilization: industrialism, materialism, individualism—everywhere we see the struggle alive, always the principle of polarity working itself out, the combat flaring up between individual and society.

This eternal enmity manifests itself in every sphere of life, in whatever form the individual comes in contact with the group. It is present in the sphere of (a) family, (b) school, (c) church, (d) in society as such (conventions, moral standards, etc.), (e) in professional life, (f) in political life, (g) in the economic and industrial sphere, where it shows its severest form.

As a child of his age, Kaiser is especially interested in the manifestation of this struggle in its modern aspects, which principally represent the problem of individual against machine (in the widest sense of the word). And although Kaiser realizes that it is only one phase of the everlasting active principle of polarity, he is attracted by its acute actualities.

It is imperative, therefore, that we now enter upon a brief investigation of present-day society as scrutinized by Kaiser and that we attempt to diagnose its condition. The first concern, naturally, must be: From what is society suffering? What are the symptoms of disease?

The answer has already been indicated. Society is uncomfortable, restless, unhappy. It lacks the sense of fulness of life, of that richness of feeling which comes with the participation in those mental and physical experiences for which human nature is destined and the enjoyment of which alone imparts to the individual the consciousness of not living in vain, of the realization of those cherished purposes and instincts of life which lends to it the happy knowledge of worth-while attainment.

We are here dealing with the most fundamental moral problem of human existence, the core of all problems, that of human happiness. But happiness does not defy analysis. It is closely connected with the purposes of existence which can find their fruition or frustration within those channels of civilized life which represent an organized form of encouragement or opposition to the carrying out of these purposes on the part of society.

Viewing life at large, Kaiser feels himself constrained first and foremost to condemn the mechanistic structure of society as obstructing the natural course of life and as being at the basis of a large part of misery now prevalent. What are his reasons? Machine-age society turns man into a machine. It frustrates his sense of the wholeness of life with which he is born, by coercing him to lead the barren existence of an unfree link in a chain, a willess tool. The subordination of life's throbbing faculties to the unfeeling requirements of the machine is the great tragedy of modern man. Machine civilization reduces man to an automaton performing joylessly tasks not adapted to his innate versatility, his creative instinct, his urge for self-expression. By constant ruthless insistence on man's yielding every ounce of vital energy to his assigned task, it leaves him but an empty husk incapable of using himself to freely selected purposes. So he eventually comes to a stage where his native faculties are deadened, his aspirations suppressed, his sense of life distorted.

What lies at the bottom of this sordid condition? First, the inertia of the gray mass, the unreasoning attitude which accepts life uncritically, which is fed upon a set of false notions often alluded to as public opinion, without the faculty to weigh and evaluate. The mass which is so easily victimized by the spurious sentiments of unscrupulous individuals working for their own interests and against those of the great masses whom they endeavor to sway into channels of action and modes of existence detrimental to the well-being of the great majority. It is this uncritical acceptance of false and harmful concepts and the inertia which always prefers the lull of the status quo to the effort and exertion necessary in the initiation of any change or reform which constitute the hopelessness of the situation.

One might ask: But who is interested in keeping the masses of humanity in a state of misery and indolence and blindness? And why? The answer may be given in terms of economic antagonisms. Within society there is the class of masters and the class of slaves, the rich and the poor. It lies in the interest of the dominating group to preserve the status quo by keeping in the dark the really true standards of value. The reasons for this are, first, the exaggerated individualism prevalent in contemporary society, and connected with it, the absence of a social sense of justice, self-interest without regard for others; secondly, the destructive influence of money as an expression of power, and the vast undervaluation of those simple values of life which alone can give happiness and which are not purchasable with money.

Which are the false notions grafted upon the credulous and receptive minds of the masses? First, the importance of the machine and all that it implies: production, with its breathless anxiety for efficiency at the cost of human happiness, that mad race of machines, the insatiable striving for ever-increasing material acquisitions, the feverish tempo, the hunger for wealth, the disregard of the innate values of life. Then, the concept that the aspirations of all must be coordinated with, or rather subordinated to the needs of the machine, the notion that the purpose of man's existence is to fulfill the bidding of the machine and to serve it. Again, the sense that all of life must be viewed as a mechanical structure, requiring automatic responses, admitting of no departure from the outlined course. Thus all institutions representing the organized forms of life must be rigid, impersonal, exacting, unpliable, as absolute as a scientific formula. And just as man must subordinate himself unhesitatingly to the requirements of the machine, he must react according to the mechanical regulations of social institutions which—like machines—cannot be expected to possess elasticity.

But this pessimistic view applies only to the diagnosis of the present state, not to the prediction of a solution. It is true that the picture is uninspiring and gloomy. But why? Because the world lacks the leadership and the vision which should stir it

from its present gloom and give the impulse to a new life. How does Kaiser conceive this metamorphosis? What form does that vision of a regenerated humanity assume? Kaiser himself states the question and gives the answer: "Von welcher Art ist die Vision? Es gibt nur eine: die won der Erneuerung des Menschen." [1]

Chapter Two
Synthesis
KAISER'S CONCEPTION OF THE NEW MAN

Von welcher Art ist die Vision?
Es gibt nur eine: die von der Erneuerung des Menschen.

In the preceding chapter an attempt was made to follow Kaiser's chain of reasoning to an ultimate solution of the social problem. It was suggested that Kaiser's conclusive contribution to such a solution is his idea of the New Man. It shall be the aim of this chapter to enter upon a fuller discussion of the various phases of this question.

In the essay *"Vision und Figur"* cited above Kaiser says:

"Vielgestaltig sind die Figuren, die Träger der Vision sind—von den heissen Fingern des Dichters beladen mit der grossen Fracht seiner Mitteilung. Sie würde zehn und hundert erdrücken—so müssen Scharen hinausgehen und Teile des Ganzen tragen, soviel ihre Schultern tragen. Aus allen Zonen holt sie der Anruf—kein Zeitalter, das nicht einen wichtigen und würdigen Boten lieferte. Immer bunter flirrt die Gestaltung der Vision—es wird schwer in Uebersicht aus der Vielheit der Teile das Ganze zu erkennen."

No critic could express that more concisely and eloquently than does Kaiser himself. His plays swarm with figures bearing the vision of a new humanity. At first this vision may have only the form of a vague longing for a happier life as a purely personal problem as is the case with the Cashier in *"Von Morgens bis Mitternachts"*, Krehler in *"Kanzlist Krehler"* or even Judith in *"Die Jüdische Witwe"*. Or the vision may carry man away to a dream of a new society as is the case in *"Koralle"*, *"Gas"*,

[1] "Vision und Figur" in Das junge Deutschland" I, 10.

"Hölle, Weg, Erde", *"Gats"*, *"Mississipi"*. It may take the form of love for an individual as in *"Das Frauenopfer"*, *"Der Brand im Opernhaus"*, *"Juana"*. Or as in *"Nebeneinander"*, *"Die Bürger von Calais"*, *"Noli me tangere"* love for humanity may be the motivating force.

Many are the bearers of the vision, but also many are the forms of the vision:

"Vielgestaltig gestaltet der Dichter eins: die Vision, die von Anfang ist. So stösst sie mit seinem Blut, das sie stösst: unnachgiebig und hitzig . . ."

And what Kaiser says in another place in the same essay, might well be applied to the critics alluded to at the beginning of the first chapter:

"Der herbeilaufende Beschauer starrt aufs Gewühl. Er widerspricht: wo stekt die Einheit . . .? . . . Was wusste er vom Gesetz, das die vielen Figuren, die ihn erschrecken, zueinander stellt. Kann er von heute auf morgen die Stücke so ordnen, wie sie seiner Erkenntnis nützen? Mit seinen verwirrten Händen?"

In several plays Kaiser alludes directly to the advent of the New Man. Thus the aged father of Eustache de Saint Pierre exclaims in *"Die Bürger von Calais"*: "Ich habe den neuen Menschen gesehen—in dieser Nacht ist er geboren!" In *"Gas I"* a new humanity seems to be dawning with the hope of an idyllic settlement: "Triften von Breite in Grüne sind neuer Bezirk!... Ihr seid alle entlassen aus Fron und Gewinn—Siedler mit kleinstem Anspruch—und letzter Entlohnung:—Menschen!" And in *"Gats"* we read "Der Mensch ist zu kostbar, um ein Zuviel zu sein. Eure Ueberzahl stiess ihn zum Kot." And further: "Heilig ist die Geburt, die nur würdige Menschen schafft!" Again, the Captain in *"Gats"* relates of an ideal human type he had met with in the forest: "Menschen wie ihr—und über euch hinaus Menschen mit stärkerem Antlitz und leichterer Gebärde. Sie leben das Beispiel des Menschen." And in another place he utters the prophecy: ". . . der Mensch bricht an . . . Ihr sollt den ewigen Menschen schaffen!" Similarly, the Millionaire's son in *"Gas I"* utters the cry: "Sammelt euch aus der Zerstreuung—und

aus der Verletzung heilt euch:—seid Menschen!" and again: "Ewig und vollkommen seid ihr alle von Ursprung her—verstümmelt euch nicht in die Zeit und die Handreichung!—seid grösser begierig nach euch!" And in *"Gas II"* the Millionaire worker: "Baut das Reich, das ihr seid in euch mit letzter Befestigung!" In *"Hölle, Weg, Erde"* Spazierer calls out: "Baut die Schöpfung, die ihr seid—im Aufbruch zu euch, wer ihr seid!" In *"Die Versuchung"*, an early play, Kaiser already strikes the note of a new humanity when he speaks of "Menschen der Zukunft, die grösser und heller die Welt umfassen mit ihren Sternen und Sonnen", and this note is echoed through his many dramas to the very latest, *"Mississipi"* in which Kehoe says: "Immer handelt es sich um Menschen, denn sie sind Gott am nächsten."

Of greater significance than these explicit references to the New Man are the characters themselves which Kaiser created. In them we must seek the particularized elements on the basis of which one may attempt the reconstruction of Kaiser's vision of the New Man.

Impressionist literature has been defined as life seen through a temperament. It might perhaps be possible to assert concerning Expressionism that it is moral vision, more particularly in Kaiser's case: the moral vision of humanity regenerated by the New Man.

To suggest the regeneration of mankind through the creation of a new type of individual has not been reserved as a first privilege for Georg Kaiser. In recent philosophy there has been the outstanding example of Friedrich Nietzsche. Meticulous philologists (in the German sense of the word philology) could trace its origin even further back, but this would be of little importance for our present purpose. Kaiser's relation to Nietzsche however is of utmost significance in the face of the fact that the philosopher has frequently and undeniably stimulated our dramatist.

Now how is Kaiser's New Man related to Nietzsche's Superman? Is it merely a dramatist's exploitation of a widely popular philosophical theory? Or are there essential differences which

permit us to consider Kaiser's New Man an entirely new conception? Nietzsche's idea of the Superman represents, in the last analysis, the resignation of one who clings to the last vestige of his optimism concerning the future of humanity. Having diagnosed mankind as incapable of bringing about that transvaluation of moral values which alone could energize the evolution of humanity, Nietzsche conceived of the Superman as a last resort with which to buttress his affirmation of life, his romantic idealism. And fundamentally it is the same process of reasoning which leads Georg Kaiser to his conception of the New Man as a creative torch-bearer and pioneer of a new humanity.

In ethical content, on the other hand, Kaiser's New Man cannot in any sense be identified with Nietzsche's Superman. The latter is in the essence of his conception an isolated, aristocratic individualist. Kaiser's New Man, on the contrary, is socially minded, democratic and distinguished by standarts of ethical rather than intellectual superiority. Nietzsche's Superman aims to advance the progress of civilization through new commandments, Kaiser's New Man strives for the advancement and welfare of human society through a new life. Nietzsche's aim is to create a new life through new ethical laws, Kaiser's goal is the creation of new laws through a new life. Or to state it differently, to Nietzsche life is the result of a new ethical imperative; in the case of Kaiser a new ethical imperative emanates from a new life.

To draw a clear parallel, one might say that the genetic origin of the theory of social evolution is similar, but that its implications are widely different and that the content differs. With Nietzsche the individual of the future is heroic, superhuman (in the literal sense of being above the rest of humanity), aristocratic, pagan, class-conscious; in the case of Kaiser, popular as opposed to heroic, human, democratic, Christian. For Kaiser the man of the future is fellow-man, "Mitmensch", for Nietzsche he is superman, "Uebermensch".

More justly perhaps we could relate Kaiser's New Man to the ethical system of Plato in which the purpose of morality is to produce a harmonious being, the fullest development of human

faculties along the lines of natural, inherent tendencies. But whereas Plato stopped with the individual and ignored social implications of the problem, Kaiser like Nietzsche takes the general as a starting point, proceeds from it to the individual, does not however limit his interest to the individual alone, but through a dialectic process returns to the problem of society whose salvation he expects to find through the individual, the New Man. Therein he joins the school of Rousseau in his optimistic conclusions regarding the innate goodness of human nature (unlike skeptical Nietzsche) and follows Tolstoy with whom he shares the intensely Christian sense of moral obligation and the love for fellow-man. Thus the ultimate source of Kaiser's conception of the New Man seems to be in religion. This inference will become more plausible, when we consider that Kaiser's New Man is not a realistic creation, but a creature born of a spiritual vision. And a vision is nothing but the anticipation of reality in spirit. Hence the New Man's first reality is in the idea. The idea, however, is dynamic force, is an imperative to change the existing world and adapt it to its form. The idea is the moral imperative for a change, a metamorphosis, a rebirth. It is a commandment to die, in order to resurrect and to live a new and better life. And in this we recognize also Buddha's and Christ's conception of the "New Man". In both religious doctrines, different as they may otherwise be, the idea of inner rebirth plays a predominant role, indeed, it may justly be considered as the cornerstone of both the Buddhistic and the Christian religion.

The first tenet of Kaiser's theory of the New Man is consequently: *Man is essentially good.* In the whole array of characters with whom Kaiser's dramas are peopled, it would be hard to find a single character concerning whom one might assert with any degree of justice that he is congenitally degenerate or that he possesses innately criminal, that is anti-social proclivities. Whatever decadent or corrupt traits are displayed by a human being are due to social maladjustment or an aberration of original instincts. In this lies the great optimistic strength of Kaiser, the psychological foundation of his ethical ideal, or perhaps one would better say, of his ethical Utopia.

To substantiate this first tenet of Kaiser's theory of the New Man one need only examine a number of the characters and analyze the impelling motives of their lives, to find that in not a single case are they of an originally and unqualifiedly base nature. What, for instance, is the driving force which propels the activities of the Millionaire in *"Koralle"?* Has he started out on a career of financial conquest in order to be able to rule over the weaker members of society for the sake of the satisfaction which may come to one from the sense of possession, from the love of mastery, because of Nietzschean intoxication with power? Not in the least. The Millionaire is himself a helpless victim of fear, of the fear of poverty, is himself a fugitive from misery, haunted by the dreadful recollection of distress he had known in earlier life. And what is his chief ambition? Nothing but the very human and very bourgeois desire to build a safe and sheltered future for his children, to save them from experiencing the lot which had been his. One could hardly detect baseness in a man like this. At the very worst one could charge him with limited social insight, ingrown interest. But was that not a defensive attitude of the underdog?

Who are the evil spirits of other plays? They are not men, but man in the abstract, man as the symbol of an irrational system which has transcended the individual and become a menacing, ferocious, destructive hydra, elusive to human control as the yellow poisonous gas revolting against a formula, becoming law unto itself, imperilling its creator like a monstrous Golem, or to use another metaphor, perhaps more apt, like the rising flood of the Sorcerer's Apprentice which he could call forth, but had no power to stop. For humanity, Kaiser believes, has not developed its powers sufficiently to control the magic forces of the social structure as would the master-sorcerer, the man-to-come, the New Man he heralds, a society of individuals like Spazierer of *"Hölle, Weg, Erde"*, like the Pawnbroker in *"Nebeneinander"*, like Eustache de Saint Pierre in *"Die Bürger von Calais"*.

In mentioning *"Nebeneinander"* one might say, What of some of the minor characters in that play, the scheming, unscrupulous,

unprincipled clique of Neumann, Borsig, the latter's sister and the rest? The objection can be answered with the single assertion that their debased moral character is not the outcome of inherent baseness, but that they have been poisoned by the impure breath of a decadent society. It is true that they are selfish, grasping, cynical. But so is the rest of the world around them. They drift with the current along the line of least resistance, lacking the courage, the conviction, the love of humanity which characterize the Millionaire's descendants, the Pawnbroker, Spazierer, Eustache.

To take another example from a different group of plays, the comedy *"Kolportage"*. Is Count Stjernenhö a character beyond salvation? What is the damaging evidence against him? He marries for the sake of money to repair badly battered finances. He is unfaithful, inconsiderate. He leads an unproductive existence. Is there anything in this which cannot be traced back directly to influences of education and environment? Certainly the senseless squandering of wealth is a social phenomenon, a disease of the social structure. The leading of a useless life certainly is a class-disease. And the other faults are so obviously an outgrowth of the preceding ones that one hardly needs to qualify them. And what was said concerning Stjernenhö, applies exactly as well to the whole group which he represents, the Countess Stjernenhö, the Baron Barrenkrona, the earlier Acke. As an additional proof that these traits are acquired rather than inborn we need only mention Acke himself who with the resoluteness of youth liberates himself from the burden of social decadence to begin a new life. As an eloquent example of the fact that the ugliness of life is the result of social conditions stands Frau Appeblom who, given the chance, extricates herself from the mire of her existence to take up a decent form of life.

What of the very murderers in Kaiser's plays? King Marke in *"König Hahnrei"* who slays Tristan and Isolde is no more than a morbid perverted victim of a wrong attitude, the possessive claim of our philosophy of sex against which George Sand argues so ardently in *"Die Flucht nach Venedig"*; Which turns Claudius in the one-act play by the same name into a blood-

thirsty beast; to prevent the brutally sombre effects of which Juana in *"Juana"* is willing to die; from which Friedrich succeeds in escaping to the lofty and humane attitude of tolerance in *"Friedrich und Anna"*.

Or to mention another murderer, Krehler in the play *"Kanzlist Krehler"*, is he not the demented victim of a social system that tends to smother all that is human? His motive is not that of a man who seeks to harm a fellow-man. His act is the insane protest against life itself, against the system which has stifled his all-too-human longings. And is not Basileus in *"Die Lederköpfe"* the victim of a false philosophy of military glory?

It is needless to multiply examples. Those already cited may be sufficient to explain and motivate all that is anti-social, decadent, morbid and perilous in the nature of man.

Closely connected with this first tenet of Kaiser's idea of the New Man, and growing organically out of it, is Kaiser's second tenet, the belief in *the power of regeneration* of man. This thought has perhaps been stressed with the intensest enthusiasm in the works of the Russian masters, Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky. How much this fervent belief in the innate goodness of man owes to Kant's categorical imperative would be hard to say. It is however certain that it implies the existence of a strong moral instinct in man which conditions of life may have in their power to turn from their original course, but which are certain to burst forth with greater force when the moment of reawakening and moral stock-taking comes. The characters of Raskolnikoff in Dostoyevsky's *"Crime and Punishment"*, of Karamazoff in his *"Brothers Karamazoff"*, of Tolstoy's Count Nechludoff in *"Resurrection"* or his Nikita in *"The Power of Darkness"* probably have no equals in modern literature. But the theme has been taken up avidly also in the works of modern German authors among which Wassermann's *"Christian Wahnschaffe"* is an outstanding example.

In as early a play of Kaiser's as *"Rektor Kleist"* we find a hint of this attitude in the character of Kornmüller. It is fully developed in *"Der Brand im Opernhaus"* in which the anonymous Herr von... suddenly abandons a life of dissipation to become

a man of ideals, a believer in purity and unselfish love. It is the same spirit which stirs the Millionaire's son in *"Koralle"* to revolt against the life planned for him by his father and to join his fate with that of exploited, downtrodden, suffering mankind.

Fully triumphant, this attitude emerges again in *"Hölle, Weg, Erde"* where not only selfish Lili and Edith who are at first unwilling to sacrifice the purchase of some jewelry to save a human life, become recalcitrant, but where the whole array of stiff-necked, callous and utterly unsympathetic characters undergo a miraculous transformation and become willing to assume the responsibility dictated to them by their consciences.

The power of moral regeneration of man could not be conceived of without recognition of this next tenet in Kaiser's moral categories: *the tender conscience,* a sensitive organ of moral perception. It is manifested in varying degree in all of the characters discussed in this chapter. It exists as a great dynamic driving force in the Millionaire's son in *"Koralle"*, in the Pawnbroker in *"Nebeneinander"*, in Spazierer in *"Hölle, Weg, Erde"*; it transforms the life of Herr von . . . in *"Der Brand im Opernhaus"*; it flares up for a moment in the perverted mind of Marke in *"König Hahnrei"* after the commission of the murder, in the brutal Claudius after the last bloody act in *"Claudius"*; it perplexes the hitherto unshaken Kornmüller in *"Rektor Kleist"* after the death of Fehse; it leads Sylvette in *"Der Brand im Opernhaus"* into the flames; it causes Elmire in *"Der Präsident"* to forsake her father.

Man's moral conscience implies the assumption of the fact that he is a distinctly social creature, is consequently the recognition of *the universality of man.* The truism that the individual cannot lead an isolated and independent existence, that he is no more than an atomic unit of the vast system from which he draws his sustenance, is the first principle of ethical understanding. How poorly humanity is instructed in this first ethical precept is seen from the fact that Kaiser finds it necessary to postulate it for his New Man.

Only when this understanding of man's universality has come to him, is man ripe to manifest that *love of humanity* which

characterizes the New Man as the strongest impulse of his existence, which makes the Pawnbroker in *"Nebeneinander"* die without a regret, in the knowledge that he had loved his fellow-creatures, that he was willing and glad to forfeit his own happiness, nay, his own life in the manifestation of this love, service to mankind. Of this the Pawnbroker himself says to his daughter in the last scene in which he appears:

"... für einen fremden Menschen sich auf den Weg gemacht zu haben !— Darin liegt der Sinn und die Vollendung des Abenteuers. Seinen Gegenstand verlöscht es—aber die Woge schäumt silberweiss, die es aufriss. Ich vernahm die Stimme meines Nächsten—vor der sich die andern verschlossen—ich hörte sie! Mir heilte sich die Taubheit—ich konnte mit beiden Ohren horchen!"

It is this love of humanity which drives Spazierer in *"Hölle, Weg, Erde"* on his frantic mission to save an unknown fellow-creature's life exactly as in the case of the Pawnbroker. It is love of humanity which impels Eustache de Saint Pierre in *"Die Bürger von Calais"* to perform the highest act of self-sacrifice. The difference is only in the degree of understanding which guides the impulse of love into channels of activity, to unselfish acts of service. This love has not yet fully emerged from the bonds of eroticism in Countess Lavalette in *"Das Frauenopfer"*, in Sylvette in *"Der Brand in Opernhaus"*, nor in Juana; it is not yet fully conscious in the case of Elmire in *"Der Präsident"* or the simple-minded Pawnbroker in *"Nebeneinander"*; it becomes of broader social significance in *"Koralle"*—*"Gas"*, in *"Gats"*, *"Hölle, Weg, Erde"*, but its counsel falls upon deaf ears and is finally frustrated, except in the last-mentioned play in which Spazierer leads the way into a new world whose structure however remains in vague outline; it culminates in the lofty conception of duty in *"Die Bürger von Calais"*, where love and understanding merge into a harmonious entity, where it is noble impulse, unselfish action, consciousness of duty, insight into the meaning and purpose of life, directing will and inspiration—all in one. Here humanity reaches sublime heights to which one almost feels inclined to ascribe divine attributes and to which one is tempted to apply the beautiful expression "amor dei intellec-

tualis", with a slight variation of the original Spinozistic interpretation. For in this attitude we find the three great elements of love, divinity and understanding.

Through what mental processes is the New Man led to the crystallization of a new world-view? What is his phychological evolution? The individual's first concern is his own happiness. Psychologically, nothing exists beyond that. Socially, however, the problem is one of great complexity. In Kaiser's types we find both stages represented.

Man seeks happiness. At first he does so blindly. Then the obstacles, against which he clashes, compel him to take into account forces whose existence he may not have suspected, or of whose effect upon his life he may have been unaware. Thus the individual problem assumes a social aspect.

For Kaiser the problem of self-realization is synonymous with the problem of happiness, and consequently it becomes the individual's first concern. The capacity for multiform experience is closely related to the faculty of enjoyment which constitutes happiness. And so the more perfect realization of function, the greater becomes the degree of happiness.

This agreement between the subjective element of happiness and the objective, of perfection of function, involves the view that the growth of multiform activity or experience is followed by greater happiness. Experience, if it is not to result in the crippling of man's nature, must be harmonious, that is, it must not limit man to a harrowing existence which permits of no exercise of his faculties and tends to atrophy them into a state of inertia. Intellectual development, for example, must not be acquired totally at the expense of the physical aspect, if it is not to cause grave consequences.

This very idea is illustrated by Kaiser in *"Rektor Kleist"* in a double sense. The cult for physical health impairs the capacity for sound judgment in Kornmüller who by his insistence on an investigation is doubtless largely responsible for the tragic outcome of the drama, just as the caricatured Kleist himself whose physical disintegration is accompanied by moral weakness, bears the greater share of responsibility in the death of the pupil

Fehse. This problem is touched upon again in *"Der Geist der Antike"*, but it is brought out with special poignancy in *"Der Gerettete Alkibiades"* where it becomes the central theme of the play.

The case with present-day civilization is analogous. The rapid progress achieved in many directions may be charged with the failure to produce that degree of spiritual contentment that might be expected to accompany it. Preoccupation with material interests, the destruction of conditions which fit the individual to live fully according to his capacities, are responsible for the mutilation of life and for the absence of true happiness. This is the pivotal question in the social plays from *"Von Morgens bis Mitternachts"*, through *"Die Koralle"*, *"Gas"*, *"Hölle, Weg, Erde"*, *"Kanzlist Krehler"*, *"Gats"*, to *"Mississipi"*.

The first psychological step in the evolution of the New Man is the *sudden awakening to the problem of self-realization.* This alone makes him a unique phenomenon amidst the stultified and apathetic mass of humanity which has not problems at all. Of a sudden, because of some unusual, most often merely trifling incident the New Man awakens to the awareness of the world in which he had been living as if in a hypnotic state. Something within him stirs to life, begins to question; buds of longing open up within him, and for the first time make him human, and for the first time—unhappy. Until this moment he has perhaps felt no special contentment, but having desired little, he could not feel the acute pang of spiritual hunger.

It is such a trifle which brings about the inner revolution in the life of the Cashier in *"Von Morgens bis Mitternachts"*. A waft of perfume, the sight of a richly garbed lady, an air of adventure and exoticism, and in a brief moment the ground crumbles underneath his feet, his present existence with all its tangible realities dwindles into insignificance, fades into the distance, and he is ready to plunge headlong into bewildering and ruinous adventures to realize for a brief space the dream of a more abundant life, a dream which had been dormant within him until then. For it is typical of the New Man that he should have the capacity to dream.

In search of a similar dream, Kanzlist Krehler—disturbed from decades of a lethargic existence by a single day of freedom from routine—precipitates himself just as blindly into a course of events which ends no less tragically.

Both the Cashier and Krehler represent the stage of blind impulsive stirring from sleep to the conscious life of man which points to a new generation. In their blind revolt against a stifling and unbearable form of existence there is as yet little cerebral or purposive; their rage points to no definite object; therefore their course, knowing no compromise, must end in self-destruction or in madness as is the case with Oliver in *"Zweimal Oliver"*.

More purposive, although equally unsuccessful in the ultimate attainment of its goal, is the revolt of the Millionaire. But thus far the attempt to solve the problem of self-realization has been confined to a purely personal solution in which the social aspect remains in the background as a negative *obstructive* force.

The next step is the recognition of the truth that the individual problem of self-realization must concern itself directly with society and the problems of the world, since there can be no problem which remains purely personal, but that the social ramification of each problem makes it a paradox to consider it as in the last analysis personal. In other words, *the problem of self-realization is elevated to the stratum of consciousness.* The Millionaire's son realizes this truth, and in his search for a richer form of life he escapes from isolated quietude into the turmoil of social interest.

This leads in turn to the understanding of the truth that since individual happiness depends upon favorable conditions in the system of society, it is necessary to reform society. Consequently the interest shifts from the individual to the problem of society. *The problem of individual happiness becomes the problem of social welfare.* That the individual is the means and the unit of social reform, and that this is the great task of the New Man, it is hardly necessary to reiterate. This predominant interest in society manifests itself in *"Koralle"*, *"Gas"*, *"Gats"*, *"Nebeneinander"*, *"Hölle, Weg, Erde"*. It reaches its highest point of intelligent application in *"Die Bürger von Calais"*.

Part Two
AN ANALYSIS OF THE PLAYS IN THE LIGHT OF THE THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

CHAPTER ONE
GEORG KAISER'S STYLE

In the first part the chief aim of this investigation was to penetrate to the core of Kaiser's philosophy of life without entering upon a detailed discussion of individual plays. Before undertaking the latter task it will be necessary to dwell briefly on the dramatist's technical approach to his problems and to examine how he applies the dialectical principle to the presentation of his themes.

From what has been said thus far it could not have escaped anyone's attention that Kaiser's social philosophy shows a clearly dialectical outline. Through an examination of the dramatist's method of approach it should be possible to establish the relation existing between the content and the form of his work, or as one would term them with more technical precision in German, between *Gehalt* and *Gestalt.*

To this end we must first recognize the fact that the majority of Kaiser's dramas are a distinct product of our age and that their form is perfectly suited to the expression of the *Zeitgeist,* the spirit of the time. In brief, Kaiser's drama which aims to portray the spiritual upheavals of a mechanistic age, is itself constructed according to mechanical principles, is consequently rigid, impersonal, planned in accordance with a definite architectonic design. Of the spirit motivating this style Kaiser himself says: [1]

"Das Heissblütige muss in Form starr werden; und härter und kälter die Sprache, je flutend-überflutender Empfindung bedrängt."

The mechanistic world is expressed by Kaiser not only through his nameless, unindividualized, anonymous characters, but through the very stage-background abounding in mechanical devices, the latest technical discoveries, electric switch-boards, flashing signal-lights, turbines, megaphones, formulas, gas explosions, rooms

[1] "Vision und Figur," publ. in "Das junge Deutschland" I, 10; October, 1918.

of ultra-modern design, strange color effects. All of which combines to produce a distinctly cubistic impression. His very language is reduced to the mere essentials of articulate speech. It is his general practice in his expressionistic plays to omit articles, pronouns, particles, in short, to discard all the unessential ballast of words and to retain only what is the kernel of the thought. For the sake of compact, terse expression he will violate the most timid verb-compounds, strip the most bashful thought to the skin.[1]

Kaiser aims at essentials. One is forced to think of Rodin, master in another realm, and of the fact that it was not perhaps chance alone that impelled the two to devote their creative energies to the same theme, that of the citizens of Calais. In both we find the almost painful quality of concentration, of ignoring the obvious and the unessential. It is the art of producing the desired effect by the emphatic projection of an illuminating and all-important artistic thought out of an obscure and undeveloped background which, having no part in the contemplated effect, must remain unformed like the crude rock from which with sudden transition looms the sculptured face.

To call Kaiser's style telegraphic, is to describe it superficially. They have just this in common, that there is an avoidance of verbosity, scrupulous economy, a tendency to say only the necessary minimum. But to understand Kaiser's style, one must understand the dynamic structure of his characters, the vital force with which they are charged and which obviates the need for greater articulateness. The very appearance of the characters on the stage has in it something of this dynamic quality. Even the atmosphere is saturated with it. Energy vibrates in the air. This is especially true of the plays of the social cycle, *"Gats"*, *"Gas"*, *"Von Morgens"*, *"Bürger von Calais"*. One is physically aware of the presence of an energized multitude. The rhythm of pregnant silences, of the swelling sea of voices, the rise and fall of sounds which are like the tides of a stormy sea are the rum-

[1] A few examples chosen at random from a single play, "Hölle, Weg, Erde," illustrate this tendency amply: "Edith hast du Bleistift?" "Haftsoldat anlegt Fesseln," "Anwalt . . . anstarrt Spazierer," "Vortritt nicht jeder?" "Wie festhalte ich die Häftlinge?"

blings of struggling forces. And there is a distinctly musical quality in the rising cadence of silence breaking into a low muttering which slowly gathers force and culminates in speech breaking forth from the surging mass.

Dynamic is also the quality of the characters' physical appearance. Their motions are intense with meaning, their groupings suggest unmistakably the struggling inner forces; hands outstretched, groping arms, the weary gesture of a drooping hand carry with them the poignant expressiveness of a tableau.

Within this system of struggling forces the individual loses himself in a state of anonymity. It is accordingly impossible to conceive in Kaiser a flexible, varying style adapted to individualizing purposes or changing situations. Consequently there can be no characteristic idiom belonging exclusively to a representative of one class or another. Kaiser's speech does not aim at realism; it is essentially a poetic language, the crystallized and pure though perhaps often colorless idiom of condensed spiritual experience and concentrated thought.

Kaiser distinguishes the kind of proletarian, millionaire, clerk, bank director, distinguished lady, prostitute, lawyer or jailer not by means of typifying speech, but solely through content and physical appearance which is usually tinged with symbolism. He employs technical devices to bring out contrasts of character and makes use of symbols of form, color, object. The Millionaire in "*Koralle*" is distinguished from his double, the Secretary, by means of a coral. His oval room symbolizes through its rounded lines the spirit of charity as contrasted with the hard square angles of the office of the merciless exploiter of the workers. Similarly colors are utilized to express the essential characteristics of men: gray typifies the drab theorizing of the Socialist; blue suggests the working shirt of the laborer; the gentlemen in black suggest the formal wear of the rich and leisurely; soothing green the pacifist; red the bloody business of the soldier.

The dialogue of the characters is instinct with the dynamics of struggling forces. Thesis and antithesis vie with each other for supremacy. Thoughts flash back and forth with stinging sharpness, sententious utterances clash like double-edged swords.

But not only the speech of the characters expresses a dialectical quality. The very structure of the plays, sometimes even within a single act, illustrates the dialectical approach. That can be seen distinctly in plays like *"Gats"*, *"Gas II"* and others. Most conspicuously this approach is demonstrated in *"Hölle, Weg, Erde"*, the very title of which is based on a dialectical principle. *"Hölle"* presents the negative thesis of guilt, *"Weg"* the positive antithesis of remorse and change of heart, finally *"Erde"* yields the synthesis of cosmic love and the merging of the individual with the All of humanity.

CHAPTER TWO
THESIS AND ANTITHESIS: (*The Individual Versus Society*)

The attempt to group Kaiser's plays according to a consistent inner logic, becomes baffling and bewildering. The mere force of volume presents a difficult enterprise of arrangement. And though this investigation seeks to emphasize the fundamental unity of attitude and the definiteness of the point of view underlying the bulk of Kaiser's work, it is necessary to understand that this does not imply similarity of theme, background or even, at all times, method of treatment. Far from it, the range of problems, the choice of subject matter represent a great variety of types. There are in his works elements of romanticism, expressionism, realism and symbolism; he is comedian and tragedian; he has written dramas based on various periods of history, on myth, on contemporary life.

To select a principle of sequence has been a matter of great concern. The chronological method had to be discarded as of no inherent significance and incidentally also because in some instances there is no dependable criterion of chronological allocation, the plays having been published years after they were written.

There remains accordingly the logical order of grouping the plays on the basis of the problems they present in the scheme of Kaiser's dialectic. In this chapter an attempt will be made to demonstrate how the eternal struggle between the individual and society works itself out in the various spheres of life (*Lebenskreise*).

All classification, to be sure, is largely arbitrary. In the case of Kaiser the injection of and the allusion to various problems side by side in the same play makes the task of a clear-cut arrangement into groups so much more difficult. An attempt will be made, however, to discuss together groups of plays which deal along general lines with identical or similar questions.

INDIVIDUAL VERSUS INDIVIDUAL

A large group of Kaiser's plays deals with problems which can roughly be classified as belonging to *the sphere of the family.* More strictly it is the problem of the relation of man and women, the question of love, fidelity or the right of possession and sexual morality: the problem of *individual versus individual.*

Thus, for example, the moving force of *"König Hahnrei"* is principally the erotic motive. It bears all the earmarks of Kaiser's earliest stage of dramatic technique and more than any other it allows itself the luxury of long-winded speeches in the style of the old rhetorical school. Freyhan, with perfect justice, points out its romantic atmosphere, proving his case well with copious citations of illustrative detail.[1] Diebold views the play as a problem of psychological perversion arising from senile impotence,[1] Lewin considers it a drama of jealousy, "der gehemmten, der ohnmächtig-beherrschten Eifersucht".[2]

The play certainly warrants these opinions, but it stands for even more than that. Marke undoubtedly is the pivotal character of the play and represents in the words of Freyhan the tragedy of the visionary.[3] The fever of his perversely suppressed personality arouses no little interest, but beyond that there is another problem ignored by the above cited interpretations which seems of utmost importance to Kaiser, a problem with which he deals again in *"Die Flucht nach Venedig"*: the nature of love and the source of the tragedy of love. Viewed from this angle, Marke yields his place of foremost importance to what must otherwise remain a subordinate theme, namely that of Tristan and Isolde.

[1] Max Freyhan, "Georg Kaiser's Werk," p. 164.
[1] Bernhard Diebold, "Der Denkspieler Georg Kaiser," p. 88.
[2] Ludwig Lewin, "Die Jagd nach dem Erlebnis," p. 49.
[3] 3 See p. 168.

The problem of love resolves itself here into the problem of possession; the tragedy of love is due to the recognition of the right of possession. Marke's tolerance kills the love of Tristan and Isolde. Why? Is it sense of guilt? Love must thrive on truth and freedom, but the weakness of the lovers allows them to accept a compromise and live a lie. Thereby they acknowledge Marke's right of possession, and hence the sense of guilt.

Isolde says: If Tristan had not accepted the sword from Marke as a token of friendship when he had surrendered his in admitting the truth of the accusation concerning their illicit relation, their love could have survived. Tristan's act might have spelled their doom, but to brave it would have been clearing the air of the lie, throwing the gauntlet in face of convention, challenging the King's essential right of possession on a purely natural human basis. They could have lived in truth. But Tristan's compromise became the commencement of their love's swan song.

Then again, if they had remained in the swamp-surrounded forest, love could have continued, nurtured on freedom. It died, when Tristan lacked the courage to defy Marke's summons to return. It ended, because that meant a surrender of freedom, the return to a life of sham and hypocrisy. From the conquest of the natural by the moral law, nothing but death could result.

The morbid and abnormal psychology of Marke which eventually leads him to the murder of Tristan and Isolde, leads Gilles de Rais, the Marshal of France to a career of even more sordid crime in the play *"Gilles und Jeanne"*. Behind the battle-scene Gilles blinded with passion, meets Jeanne. What matter victory or defeat, life or death? Jeanne alone matters. For her he had created an army; for her he had won the first battle; spurred by desire, he had done what he had done. Now she must be his. Amidst death and suffering and the threatening tumult of battle. Every conceivable triumph had been his. Now he must conquer the most irresistible, the unconquerable Jeanne. But something in her manner frightens him. He flees from her presence.

Later, before the ecclesiastical court which is trying Janne for her life, Gilles de Rais testifies without having been summoned:

Jeanne is a witch, the devil's paramour. With these words he damns her to death at the stake. Tormented by her image, he resorts to the most beastly cruelties to still his conscience. He drowns his passion and longing in blood. When brought to trial for the murder of six missing girls, he coldly denies all guilt. The court declares him vindicated.

And now a miracle happens: Gilles, exonerated and free to go, confesses his crimes. What has taken place? A mere coincident. A girl, called Jeanne, appeared in the court-room in the last moments of the trial. In a moment of spiritual illumination Gilles envisions the real Jeanne standing before him in her great purity and fearless heroism, Jeanne who had resisted him on the field of battle, who had bravely accepted his false testimony which sent her to her death, Jeanne who had changed him into a madman and into a bloodthirsty murderer through the unquenchable flame of passion she had stirred up in him, a passion commingled of love and hatred. And now through the tortuous ways of suffering and bloody crime she was leading him to contrition and to death which alone would purge him and return him to humanity.

The Papal Nuntius presiding over the trial recognizes the significance of this voluntary confession, when he says:

"Es ist mehr geschehen als unsere Verdammnis sühnt!! Ein Mensch bekannte sich ! ! Wer ist nicht seinesgleichen ? ! . . . Wir wollen die Scheiter sammeln und den Holzstoss richten : . . . jeder brennt mit Gilles, der für alle verbrennt ! ! ! ! . . ."

The still small voice of conscience which saves the humanity of Gilles de Rais is heard once again in the fantastic erotic caprice *"Claudius"*, a one-act play. Claudius, a knight mad with jealousy, makes nocturnal rounds of the nobles' castles and challenging them in the name of an unnamed woman, slays them one by one, so that none of his equals may become his rival for the love of his beautiful young wife.

Having slain the last of his possible knightly rivals, he returns home only to learn from his wife's own lips that she had given her love to many among the nameless ones in the street of the humble. Through him she had learned what power her beauty had over men's hearts and she had given herself freely and

cheerfully, bringing strength and joy to many whose lives were poor. Claudius, maddened by this disclosure, slays his wife and bids the servant to set the house on fire. Then a brief sentence escapes him: "Ich bin ein Tier." In these four words is contained his human redemption.

The brutal attitude of the possessive male which plays havoc with King Marke in *"König Hahnrei"* and which finally leads to the murder of the lovers after a severe inner struggle against the forces of tolerance and nobility; the beastly thirst for blood which motivates the love of Claudius, slowly yield to a brighter and more human attitude.

The first glimpse of this new attitude is afforded us in the beautifully written little play *"Friedrich und Anna"*. Its spirit is still purely romantic, of an illusive charm which, as in *"Claudius"* is strongly reminiscent of Maeterlinck. In both, the events are laid in no definite place and they take their course in no definite time. The spirit of a bygone age can be sensed from incidental allusions to medieval usage and code of honor. The language is tinged with the lucid and simple beauty of Plato whose *"Dialogues"* Friedrich is perusing as the play opens.

Friedrich's tutor has brought a letter which discloses that Anna had known the love of another before she became Friedrich's wife. He must challenge the man and clear the honor of his name in blood. But Friedrich displays no eagerness. More than the life of the other he desires to know: Was he a scoundrel, who betrayed his wife when she was a child? Was he a charlatan who intruded himself into her life? Was he a sneak? Anna herself must answer. Truthfully, she answers in the negative. Of her free will she had given him her love, of her free will she had met him who gave her happiness. A force stronger than either had drawn them together:

"Er musste kommen!—Es war kein Wort gesagt—nicht von mir—nicht mit seinem Munde!—doch am Abend musste ich ihn erwarten—und er musste mich suchen. Das war so—ohne den Willen des einen und des andern—und doch mit jedem Willen vom einen und vom andern! . . . Es war dieser Wille, der uns beide zwang!"

Here as in the sentiments uttered later by Sand in *"Die Flucht nach Venedig"*, or as in *"Oktobertag"*, one is struck by the same sense of the fatality of sexual attraction and equally as much by the spirit of purity which emanates from these couples. As against the morality of convention, rises the ethical code of natural law, the Nietzschean affirmation of life's inherent forces. Here belong also Tristan and Isolde from *"König Hahnrei"* who have however not yet succeeded in freeing themselves from the shackles of convention and by their compromise destroy their love.

A woman's divided or mutiple love which is the problem in *"Claudius"* and *"Friedrich und Anna"*, underlies also *"Juana"*. But whereas in the first play man's hate for his rivals remains unabashed, except perhaps for a suggestion of a dawning perception of the inhumanity of it, the second represents the humanized stage in which Friedrich conquers male hate for his rival and invites him to his house.

In *"Juana"* the woman parts two friends greatly devoted to each other, and becomes the cause of their mutual hatred which however is sublimated in the end through the woman's self-sacrifice to even higher friendship. For Juana considers friendship among men too rare and too precious to be marred by a woman. And as she drains the glass of poison, she commands the two men to cherish their friendship.

Juana, like the Countess Lavalette in the play *"Das Frauenopfer"*, points to the birth of *a new humanity*. Both are still motivated by personal impulses from which the later figures of Kaiser's new humanity succeed in liberating themselves.

Spiritually untouched by the brutal treatment received at the hands of the soldatesque, Countess Lavalette is mindful only of the great deeds of her husband which to make possible, she had borne shame and brutality without complaint. But when she sees him complacently hiding away from danger, it is too much for her to bear. To Lavalette the vision of his wife reviled by the soldatesque is torment without surcease, a memory which sullies her image in his soul. Again the Countess sacrifices herself for her husband, permits the gendarmes to shoot her in

place of Lavalette. With her life-blood she is cleansed in his eyes.

The fortunate political developments which now follow are meaningless to him. In the presence of her death all else is without importance. And so when he is informed of Napoleon's return, all he can do is reply with bitter callousness: "Der Kaiser?" What does it matter? What can anything matter?

Death as an act of purification occurs again in *"Der Brand im Opernhaus"*. To atone for her betrayal of her husband, Sylvette seeks death in the flames of the Paris Opera from which she alone of all the people present had rescued herself before.

But the interest of the play is centered not so much on Sylvette as on the anonymous Herr von . . . , an unscrupulous roué who like a character from a Tolstoy novel or like Wassermann's Wahnschaffe abandons a dissolute mode of existence and marries the orphan-girl Sylvette who is to him a symbol of the purity which he had never known. Herr von . . . himself describes this metamorphosis:

"Mich durchzuckte der Blitz an einem Abend. In seltsamster Umgebung thronte ein Mädchen . . . Im Spiegel ihres Antlitzes—von Reinheit offen—grinste mir mein verzerrtes Gesicht entgegen. Es war ein widerliches Erkennen. In jeder Runzel wucherte Scheusslichkeit Gemeinheit machte sich plump und breit. Der Aussatz war auf mir—der Bösere, der aus Gesinnung keimt!! . . . Ein Engel kam! Segnungen brachen über mich herein—der Unwürdigste wurde emporgetragen zum Himmel. Ich tauchte auf zu reicherer Geburt . . . Ich war—wie sie, die rein war! Wie sie—ein Kind."

And when he learns of her betrayal, Herr von . . .refuses to recognize Sylvette. What she had represented for him—purity, truth, faith, affection, is no longer. With it she as an individual has likewise ceased to be, as if he had lost her in the great fire. For the vision of personality implies a harmonious identity of body and soul, and if one part perishes, the integrity of the whole is erased, the entity destroyed.

He is aware of her physical presence, but what matter? The distinguishing, individualizing trait of her—his belief in her purity and integrity, has perished and with it the uniqueness of

personality. Now she is an insignificant creature, indistinguishable, of no consequence. He had loved his vision of her which she has destroyed.

Such an attitude can grow only out of a distinctly idealistic philosophy which identifies reality with the idea which it embodies. Therein Kaiser is unmistakably a disciple of Plato. Reality to him is our representation of it, not objective existence. A pragmatic realist could not in the place of Herr von . . . detach himself so suddenly and so completely from the object of his love. The interchanged identity of the King's mistress and Sylvette is a symbolical act of merging distinctions, a graphic application of uncompromising idealism. But in a sense it is also the desire on the part of Herr von . . . to seek refuge from disappointment in a saving illusion which alone makes the continuation of life possible, the illusion which was at the source of Marke's insane clinging to an imaginary belief in faithfulness and loyalty which were denied him in reality.

A similar treatment can also be witnessed in *"Oktobertag"*. For Catherine the ideal of her lover is no less than reality. His physical existence is merely an accident of reality. A somewhat less extravagant instance of the same character may be pointed out in the case of *"Kolportage"* where Karin ceases to love Count Stjernenhö as soon as she discovers that she has deceived herself regarding his character. Kaiser does not recognize physical attachment in its own right, persisting in spite of adversities, as a realist would. Similarly, the love of Tristan and Isolde in *"König Hahnrei"*, marred by the adversities of reality, goes on the rocks when the slow realization dawns on them, that they are not living the idea of their love.

For it is nothing but the power of the idea to form reality which is expressed symbolically in *"Oktobertag"* through the mystical marriage of Catherine and Marrien. In explaining the mystery of her motherhood and the implication of the innocent Lieutenant Marrien, Catherine recounts the stages that led up to it: Together they had stood before a jeweler's show-window and their glances fell on the same ring, then she followed him to church where they kneeled side by side and received a blessing,

later they occupied the same box in the opera. Thus the ring, the churchly blessing, the festive spirit of the opera consummated their union. What wonder that she anticipated joyfully the arrival of her beloved in her bridal chamber, that when she heard silent steps in the corridor, she eagerly opened the door and drew her beloved into her arms? Did her mind for a single moment embrace the thought of the butcher Leguerche? What was Leguerche in her life? He did not exist. And since he never existed in her mind, was not the child hers and Jean-Marc's?

And Lieutenant Marrien himself realizes the truth that Catherine's was a profounder reality than that for which Leguerche stood in all its ugliness and he accepts the marriage and the fatherhood which had been consummated in the mind of Catherine.

In an exotic playlet *"Der Protagonist"* this blending of reality and imagination, which later leads Oliver in *"Zweimal Oliver"* to insanity, presents a more tragic aspect. Entranced by his art, the Protagonist is a vessel through which flow impressions of life that become ephemeral realities, only to cease to be real as soon as the moment passes. In an exuberant mood, during the rehearsal of a frivolous pantomime, the Protagonist approves of his sister's lover, but as the scene changes so does his mood and he stabs his sister.

The idea as a dynamic force in life, is also illustrated in the play *"Die Versuchung"*. Under the influence of Rust's book advocating unchecked maternity as a duty to humanity and in order to give birth to a higher human type, Karla Axthelm becomes unfaithful to her husband and gives birth to a child by Rust.

Because of her incapacity to compromise and her unrelenting devotion to the idea, Karla claims the exclusive right to the possession of her child and when faced with realities which are stronger than she, and torn between several allegiances, she escapes the problem by committing suicide.

In this drama, as in several others in which marriage plays a part, the marital relation is represented as an unhappy one,

largely because it is based on false principles and because it is not in harmony with natural laws.

But the triangle situation which ends tragically in several of the plays, finds an easy solution in the comedy *"Die Papiermühle"* in which Kaiser depicts skillfully the relation between the opportunistic literateur Duchut and his wife, a relation which deadens the appreciation of the true human values possessed by Francine. They are however recognized in a flash by the poet Ollier who succeeds in persuading Duchut to divorce his wife so that the lovers may marry.

In another trifling comedy, *"Hellseherei"*, Kaiser solves the triangle problem by a reconciliation of husband and wife.

It is in *"Die Flucht nach Venedig"* that we must look for the most serious treatment of the problem of man and woman and it is probably here that Kaiser's philosophy of sex can be best understood.

Into de Musset's calm, retired life in Venice bursts the unexpected disturbing Sand from whom he had escaped from Paris. And while de Musset lies unconscious or perhaps dying in one room, Sand throws herself into the arms of the doctor in the adjoining room. She had never seen the man before this, but what of it? What of the fact that Musset lies unconscious, that in another room the doctor's mistress awaits his choice between her and Sand? Had not this woman forgotten her husband in the face of the mysterious power that threw her into the arms of this very man?

Is it betrayal? To be a traitor, one must have his eyes fixed on two opposing interests at one time, must belong here and there, yet not wholly here nor wholly there. But here the interest is undivided. One is wholly obliterated, removed into the gray mist of oblivion. What remains is this hour, this present, now. The overpowering mystery of the force that is driving one to a state of oblivion. What law is there but the law of life, of life as a mystery, an all-subjecting force, holding each experience as a ripe fruit of the moment to be seized and enjoyed or to decay with the moment.

To betray, one would have to give to someone what belongs to another. But the mystery of passion which fires the wife of the Englishman is not a gift of free choice, is not a possession to be granted to this or that according to one's will. It is the gift of Life predetermined by the Giver, therefore she is not depriving him of what belongs to him or might belong to him. She is merely the vessel of a selfless experience, a will-less wave driven along by the dynamics of existence in obedience to the force that is Life, thus truly moral. For what is morality if not the truth of living, if not the perfect truth of living fully as one must, without knowing why, selfless, reverent, humbly obedient to the call from within, the mystical call of the voice that is God?

Where is the wrong? And are not those who consider themselves wronged, simply following the creed of a man-made code violating the call of life which is the voice of God?

Why does the English woman love the man whom chance threw on her path? Is it an act of wilful betrayal? She does not know:

"Fände ich eine Erklärung, liebte ich nicht . . . Es ist Gefühl, das ohne gestern und morgen quillt und einen Tag über alle Dauer von Tagen und Jahren nachher hebt."

And it is Sand herself who says (to the Englishman):

"So sinnlos wird es hier zu erklären oder zu bemänteln. Im Sturm dieser Ereignisse der Nacht zerschellt jeder Versuch einer Überlegung. Wir beide treiben willenlos im Schicksal—ich und Ihre Frau. Nicht der Vorgang—nur die Figuren sind unterschieden. Von mir hören Sie die Beichte, die Ihre Frau Ihnen unterschlug: ein Mann ist da—ich habe ihn vorher nie gesehen. Er lebte bis gestern nicht—heute ist er das Leben. Wie kann sich das ereignen? Mit Lichtjahren stösst ein Stern nach unserem Planeten vor—plötzlich brennt auf uns sein Schein. Bestimmung zielte aus Dunkel—jetzt stehen wir betroffen. Kein Ausweg—kein Winkelzug, in Darbietung sind wir ehrlich und rein—wie mit keiner Handlung in Vorzeit."

For jealousy is merely a selfish feeling of possession, selfish interest in one's own rights. Once conquered, beyond, where the deeper understanding is, lies the realm of greater love, "die Legende der grösseren Liebe".

THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE GROUP

In the plays thus far discussed the problems concerned themselves primarily with the relation of individuals who, it is needless to say, often reflect the attitudes and reactions of the group. In the plays which are to follow, the group as such is coming into the foreground. And as must soon become obvious, Kaiser's attitude is that of a satirist who is interested in exposing the shortcomings and foibles of the social class or the section of which he treats.

In two of his early plays Kaiser, perhaps under the influence of Wedekind, turned his attention to the *sphere of the school.* The first, *"Der Fall des Schülers Vehgesack"* is a farcical comedy in which the pupil Vehgesack, a budding author, becomes a somewhat immature and involuntary Don Juan. The men at the head of the institution are mere caricatures of the bloodless pedant, whether it is Professor Hornemann who in order to save money for his researches, resolves to limit his family through continence, or the headmaster of the school, Scharfenstein, or the gossipy young Exter. They all lack determination, common sense, dignity, virility. The women, superficial and frivolous, turn with some justice from their scholarly husbands to young Vehgesack by whom Hornemann's wife becomes with child. The boy's expulsion from the school is delayed until he agrees to commit some statutory offence, since the true reason for his removal cannot possibly be admitted without disgrace to the institution. By that time however events take a favorable turn for Vehgesack, while Hornemann is dismissed for a breach of decorum.

The atmosphere of hypocrisy and emasculation which pervades *"Vehgesack"* is even more bluntly exposed in *"Rektor Kleist"*. Kleist, an irritable, sickly, hysterical old man in his early fifties, is contrasted with the strong and healthy Kornmüller, instructor of physical education, and Von Strauss, a fine young specimen of manhood. And while Kleist is sneaky, cowardly, false and creeping, the others represent the blunt and healthy side of human character.

To save himself from disgrace, Kleist attempts to persuade the weak and morbid student Fehse to take upon himself the blame for an act perpetrated by the headmaster in a state of hysterical rage, naturally promising the boy exemption from punishment. Fehse, torn between two loyalties—to Kleist and to truth, commits suicide.

The triviality of motives and the improbability of the tragedy justify Kaiser's subtitle "Tragikomödie",, As in the case of several other comedies one carries away the impression of dramatic incompetence, of literary "Kolportage". But it is interesting to observe that even in the least of Kaiser's works it is possible to discern seeds of problems and attitudes which later become of utmost import.

The lack of judgment in the sphere of moral convention is exposed to ridicule in the comedy *"Konstantin Strobel"* in which, in order to obey the dictates of an exacting bourgeois conscience and lacking in a sense of intelligent discrimination, Strobel violates the very essence of the moral code which he desires to uphold. By creating this caricature of the upstanding moral person who with the best of intentions makes a dunce of himself, Kaiser points with the gesture of a clown to an essential defect of the moral structure.

The sphere of small-town officialdom is treated in *"Die Sorina"*, a comedy with a Russian background. With its impossible situations, intrigues and gross humor, *"Die Sorina"* makes good theatre. Incidentally it is an attack upon provincialism, its unmitigated tyranny, its brutal lack of intelligence, its ludeness and vanity, its ambition unjustified by talent, its unscrupulousness of method; in a word, its lack of civilization. The characters, with the exception of Sorina and the poet Barin, are mere caricatures: Barsukoff the caricature of authority, Mastridia that of social aspiration, their servant that of canine servility, the director of the theatre that of humility, the hotelkeeper that of fear and docility in relation to superiors and brutish bossiness in relation to subordinates. Barsukoff and Mastridia together represent the caricature of the married state.

Similar in conception is *"David und Goliath"*, another typical slapstick comedy. The pivotal dramatic intrigue consists of a misapprehension on the part of Sophus Möller's relations concerning the validity of a winning lottery ticket bought in common and the consequent belief that they are all suddenly rich. Jochum Magnussen, the wealthy and greedy town-brewer, plots to gain control of this alleged fortune, but is outwitted by the insignificant bank-clerk Sophus (the David who slays Goliath) and finds himself at the shorter end of the stick.

The comedy, trivial as it may be, using outworn materials, is nevertheless interesting as a forecast of the later Kaiser. Sophus is the easily distinguishable silhouette of the Cashier of *"Von Morgens bis Mitternachts"*. Both are equally ready to throw up secure positions for a hazardous chance. Both are philosophers who despise the power of money. Both have the longing for a better life which Sophus expresses in the following words:

"Ich habe Eure Beiträge auf eine andere Karte gesetzt. Und habe ich nicht gewonnen? Ist es nicht der grössere Gewinn, einen glücklichen Menschen zu bilden?"

The great difference between the two plays consists in the method of approach. The comedy's attempt at social criticism resolves itself into a satirical approach to its characters; to give expression to certain fundamental condemnations of the social system, Kaiser has to resort to the creation of a villain through whose persons these weaknesses are represented. In *"Von Morgens bis Mitternachts"* on the other hand the hero assumes tragic proportions and in accordance with the play's expressionistic character, unimportant incidents are entirely omitted and only the significant events are flashed before our eyes with so much more poignancy.

Provincial hypocrisy, vanity and ambition is transplanted to the sphere of public endeavor and political ambition in *"Der Präsident"*. Among the documents of a deceased client Blanchonnet, an aspiring lawyer, discovers plans for the organization of an international society against white slavery. He at once decides to exploit the idea as a means of winning prestige which he would later capitalize for political advancement. Things do

go his way. Contacts with important personages, publicity through press and radio, notices in important journals: the President is in the limelight of public attention. Through the marriage of his daughter he expects to make most valuable connections.

But this young daughter, Elmire, just out of a convent-school, pious and innocent, dooms his cunning schemes to dismal failure. Ironically enough she is aided in seeing through her father's hypocrisy by two clever hotel-thieves who pose as delegates to her father's convention. Simultaneously the impostors succeed in conveying considerable information to the unsuspecting girl concerning white slavery. Her idealistic nature stirred by the related outrages, disillusioned by her father's attempt to trade his own daughter for social advantages, Elmire is ready to run away with her alleged friends and incidentally with her father's money which is to serve the double purpose of fighting white slavery in Argentina and of punishing her father so that by suffering privation he may come to see the true light.

The revolt of a simple soul against a world of sham and empty show is again the theme of as late a play as *"Zwei Krawatten"*. In a society in which class distinctions are a matter of externalities, the exchange of a black bow-tie for a white one is sufficient to transform one's personality from that of a mere waiter to that of a gentleman of the world.

This simple process of metamorphosis flings all doors of opportunity wide open before the ex-waiter Jean. In the company of the wealthy American heiress, Mabel, he goes to the States, plunges into a series of intrigues and machinations involving fabulous sums of money; is lionized by society; forms connections with men of influence; is greatly sought after; finally finds himself engaged to Mabel.

But amidst this mad dance of an opportunistic and jazz-crazed age, in surroundings of amazing luxury, he suddenly hears the voice of his old sweetheart Trude, the poor girl he had left abroad. Something stirs within him, the still voice of honesty. He is seized by a great longing to return, to escape from the unreality of a money-mad circus whirl.

And in this flight back to Trude and poverty, he returns to himself, to the simplicity of life in which he was happy, to the solid though less glamorous truth of existence in which happiness is possible without riches.

But perhaps the most scathing of Kaiser's condemnations of society in any of the comedies is found in the generally little-favored play, *"Kolportage"*. It must be admitted that the plot contains much that is hackneyed and artificial and that it is buttressed with sensationally theatrical incidents, but from the maze of this deliberate cliché Kaiser emerges in his truer form as social critic and evangel of a new humanity.

The question naturally is what Kaiser accomplished with his, to state the case mildly, unoriginal material. With Freyhan one might point out the characteristically brilliant, sophisticated dialogue which certainly adds polish and distinction to subject-matter otherwise undistinguished. But we are not primarily concerned with style. It is the problems of circumstance and character which the author succeeded in infusing into his play, whether by conscious design or the inner urge of his artistic temperament, that are of greater interest.

Two sets of characters are sharply set against each other as representatives of two opposing world-views separated by an unbridgeable chasm, the embodiments of two antagonistic principles. On the one hand, the Countess, her nephew Count Stjernenhö and the Baron, on the other, Erik Bratt, his mother, Alice—representatives of a new humanity. The Count is in spite of his birth a low swindler and an unprincipled scoundrel. Alice and Acke who are strong enough to stifle within them acquired prejudices and habitual attitudes are the flowering blossoms of a new generation. Acke in particular is a fine example of the dramatist's subtle ironic skill which works its effects not through dialogue but by means of character portrayal. He is the offspring of the scum of society, but flaunts the shibboleths of nobility in the face of the world, the proudest of the proud. To be sure, one might suggest with justice that Acke is psychologically inconsistent, since he at first refuses to acknowledge his alleged commoner-mother, Frau Bratt, but later suddenly

acquiesces and accepts the coarse and vulgar Frau Appeblom as his mother, instead of committing suicide which would be more in keeping with his traits. But the charge of psychological inconsistency would apply equally as much to other characters in Kaiser's plays. It must be taken for granted that Kaiser's characters are not *psychologically,* but *logically* consistent. In this connection Diebold's designation of Kaiser as a dramatist of ideas (Denkspieler) is undoubtedly appropriate.

Acke is a demonstration of Kaiser's essentially optimistic view that at bottom all men are truly human, and that society alone covers the glowing spark of humanity with the ashes of false philosophy. Thus even the stubborn Erbgräfin Stjernenhö is for a moment inspired with the perception of a dawning truth breaking through the deeply rooted prejudices of an old-world mind, when she says:

"Merkwürdig, dass uns der Catechismus der Adelsgeschlechter dieser Acke geschrieben hat. Es muss doch in jedem Proletarier ein Stück von einem Grafen—und in jedem Grafen ein Stück von einem Proletarier stecken."

But no less significant are her last words, the recessional of the old generation, the melancholy, resigned words of one who dies with a feeling that perhaps the fight of a life was after all the fight for a wrong cause:

". . . ich bin zu alt, um mich in diesen Bolschewismus zu finden."

It is the epitome of this belief in original human goodness which finds expression in the words of Frau Appeblom:

"Füttert die Kreatur und hätschelt sie ein bischen—da habt ihr das Rezept fürs Paradies . . ."

Kaiser's social criticism in *"Kolportage"* may be briefly summarized as follows: Society is divided by unbridgeable rifts of stereotyped concepts and false values (aristocracy versus democracy, nobility versus the lower classes). The emphasis is not placed on human values as such, but on formalistic criteria of inherited titles, rights privileges. Thus the Count never sees his wife as a human being, beautiful and endowed with rich

qualities, but as an expedient accession in his scheme. People do not lead a truthful, free existence; they are slaves to tradition, prejudice, public opinion. The Baron's attitudes are regulated patterns of action; not independent personal reactions, but involuntary acts performed in accordance with class standards and requirements. He opposes the marriage of Alice to Erik-Acke because of the blot of a commoner-mother upon his name, but when the stamp of the King's approval is given, he has no further objections. He is willing to give his daughter in marriage to Erik Bratt as soon as his legitimate rights to the name Stjernenhö are established, although the bearer of that name is a total stranger to him and his daughter. Finally, in violation of all human and parental feeling, he cruelly disinherits Alice for marrying the same man of whom he had fully approved before his true legal identity had been established. But in opposition to this, Erik Bratt, the man of a new generation can say:

"Der Namen hat sich etwas geändert, aber der Mensch ist derselbe !"

Kaiser also condemns the unproductive existence of the leisurely, as is expressed in Karin's words full of bitter resentment:

". . . was könnte man aus dieser Einöde machen. Hier rührt ja keiner einen Finger . . . Meilen Landes hätten davon noch urbar gemacht werden können. Mit Dörfern und Bauernsiedlern. Jetzt wuchert Heide über toten Acker und Wiese!"

Kaiser's positive implications in *"Kolportage"* are that the new humanity will be democratic; it will not raise artificial barriers of class between men. Man will act and feel in accordance with his true human impulses, instincts, emotions. Humanity and true nobility are not the birthright of tradition, position or privilege. Man's achievements are in a large degree results of social conditions. The child of a jail-bird and a street-woman can grow up into a proud, fine man, given the chance of an education and proper social environment. Human nature is not evil from birth, but is debased by poverty and external circumstances. Even Frau Appeblom, when given the chance, abandons her vagrant mode of life and adopts a decent, respectable form of existence.

CHAPTER THREE
SYNTHESIS
(*THE SOCIAL SOLUTION*)

Whereas the second chapter of Part Two was concerned with an analysis of the plays presenting the antagonism existing within society without endeavoring particularly to suggest any solution of the social problem, the present chapter aims to discuss the dramas of Kaiser which are characterized by a desire to wrestle with the possibilities of such a solution.

In Part One the three possible solutions were termed for the sake of convenient classification as (1) the primitive solution, (2) the solution of escape, (3) the way of reformation. We shall accordingly adhere to this order and proceed to a discussion of the plays dealing with the Primitive Solution.

Kaiser's plays with historical themes are characterized by the fact that only historical background and subject matter aim at veracity, but that the problem-sphere remains distinctly modern. It would otherwise be quite impossible to understand why a playwright like Kaiser, steeped in the tumultuous and mechanical spirit of our own age, should make excursions into the remote past for his material. One could, of course, submit that Kaiser's historical plays belong to an earlier period of his creative activity when his interest had not yet become deeply rooted in the problems of our own time, but that would be only a partial explanation. The ideational stream which courses through the sociological dramas is already, even though obscurely, present in the plays with historical themes. Their timeliness is due to the same spiritual receptivity of the age to which Hauptmann's "*Weber*" owed its success. The problems contained touch a responsive note in the minds of the generation.

The story of Judith and Holofernes, already variously exploited, would hardly seem to afford a new dramatist the opportunity to exhibit great originality. Yet Kaiser approaches his subject matter in "*Die jüdische Witwe*" with undaunted courage and with the utter lack of preconceived views of a literary pioneer. He sees in the material just what is necessary for his purpose, completely ignoring the trodden paths. And he

brings to it, incidentally, a large measure of Shavian sophistication and cynicism.

Thus his Judith rises before us not as the traditional heroine of nationalism and the defender of her hard-pressed people, but as an individual woman, struggling for her own rights, seeking a solution of her personal problems, longing to realize her own life. And so she appears before us as a symbol of revolt of the natural creature against the conspiring forces of the social structure which tend to suppress the natural impulses of her being. So she also becomes the symbol of revolt of youth throbbing with life against the forces of senility and impotence.

From the moment we are first confronted with her presence to the very last scene we are impressed with the expression of protest and revolt which stamp her every action and move. She protests against the authority of the family which seeks to subject her to its will and compel her to marry the man not of her choice. She protests her natural rights against the code of morality which requires her to remain faithful to a senile and impotent husband. Finally she carries this revolt to the very sanctum of the temple which she does not hesitate to desecrate in order to consummate the realization of her own natural vital urge.

The play bristles with Nietzchean concepts. In her affirmation of life Judith stops short of nothing. She has no pity for weakness and she is unscrupulous in the admiration of power. And only because she admires the greater strength of mind she discovers in Nebukadnezar, she begins to despise the brute physical strength of Holofernes. In her attitude to family, state and religion she is a living exponent of Nietzche's postulate of transvaluation of values. Untrue to the Hebrew tradition, she is Pagan. In her love for the freedom from moral stereotype, in her antagonism to conventionality, she is a sister of George Sand in *"Die Flucht nach Venedig"*.

The unreasoning instinctive revolt against a social form suppressing the natural life, is also the theme of *"Europa"*. Based on the Greek myth of Europa's abduction by Zeus in the disguise of a steer, the play is a burlesque replete with light

cynicism and harmless banter. The women of King Agenor's realm are impatient with the emasculated generation he has succeeded in raising, men given to graceful dancing, to the special refinements of an esthetic cult which belies nature with a barren and hybrid culture.

Led by Agenor's daughter, Europa, and goaded on by her example, they show nothing but ironical contempt for the silk-appareled dancers, secretly hoping for the spirit of virility to be reborn on earth. This rebellion of nature against an unnatural cult is symbolized by Europa's willing submission to abduction by the natural creature, Zeus in the form of a steer. It culminates in the all-too-welcome reception accorded by Europa and her retinue to the primitively masculine but genuine men dispatched by King Kadmos to the kingdom of his father, Agenor. The gist of the gay play is expressed by Agenor in the last scene in which, when truth has finally dawned upon him, he says: "Echtes Leben ist wahres Leben".

Instinctive, consequently unconscious, revolt is reserved for strong and primitive natures. For Nehrkorn in *"Der Geist der Antike"* the solution must be one of escape from an impossible struggle into a self-defensive attitude of irony. A professor of archaeology, he secludes himself in his study toiling assiduously over a project which is to remain a deep mystery until the day of its revelation. When at last the hour approaches in which Nehrkorn is to disclose his secret, the mountain has brought forth a mouse. Almost proverbially exact. Nehrkorn has constructed a mousetrap. His shocked family he assures that he is still sane. He begs them to believe it.

Did Kaiser write a play in order to make a joke? Were he a humorist, that might be a plausible explanation. But Kaiser is not essentially a humorist. Evidently the mousetrap, like the coral in *"Koralle"*, the bow-tie in *"Zwei Krawatten"*, the leather-mask in *"Die Lederköpfe"* or the thorn in *"Alkibiades"*, is merely the symbol of an idea. From ancient Greece Nehrkorn has learned to understand that the spirit of antiquity is not expressed through excavations and archaelogical investigations, but that it is contained in the comprehension of the vital forces

that animated the life of Pagan Greece. The spirit of antiquity, to him, is Nietzche's Appolonic affirmation of life, is as he says himself "das Leben—das starke mutige fruchtbringende Leben!"

In harmony with this view, Nehrkorn's most ardent desire is to turn the interest of his son and daughter away from the moldy intellectualism of the age to an appreciation and cultivation of the physical life. Leonidas is to become a sailor, is to be brought face to face with the "Strom des heissen jungen, ewiggegenwärtigen Lebens", Kassandra is to become "gertenschlank und licht". The wisdom Nehrkorn has gathered is that the world has stifled its vital forces with too much knowledge that is useless " . . . ich grub die Mumie der Welt aus!" he says in one place and in another: "wir wissen zuviel! Vollgepropft sind wir mit Wissen, dass wir keuchen wie verfettete Greise". He therefore opposes his daughter's marriage to Dr. Reiner and wishes her to marry an engineer, a man of practical sense.

But Nehrkorn is doomed to disappointment. His son is dismissed from naval service because during his watch his love of astronomy causes him to neglect his duty, Kassandra disregards her father's opposition to Dr. Reiner.

The mousetrap Nehrkorn is constructing serves, in this grotesque manner, to point out the fact that practical service, even though as trivial as a mousetrap to prevent rodents from destroying one's breakfast, is more valuable than most of the aimless scientific labors.

And in the light of this interpretation, Nehrkorn becomes a sadly misunderstood character, a crazy hero, ridiculous in his fanatical devotion to an *idée fixe* by which he is completely possessed, like so many of Kaiser's characters who become martyrs to an idea. This concentrated absorption points to the intensity with which the Expressionist man attacks the problems of life and which marks him at once as a hero and a fool.

Whereas Nehrkorn was able to express his protest and disillusionment by withdrawing into the lofty isolation of his ironical attitude, Oliver in *"Zweimal Oliver"* does not possess the strength and independence of mind to lift himself similarly above conditions. And all that is left to him, is the emotional

escape of withdrawal into a *state of unreality, or dream.* His existence made unbearable by a morbidly jealous wife, economic ruin, professional bankruptcy and the pressure of poverty which victimizes his innocent and dearly loved daughter, he is saved from utter despair by blind chance. Having been impressed by one of his impersonations, a wealthy lady invites him to pose for her as the absent friend without whom life is devoid of interest for her. In this role Oliver dreams himself into a state of happiness. But upon her friend's return, Oliver is dismissed, deeply and hopelessly in love with the lady. During a performance in his theatre, Oliver shoots the man he impersonated, convinced all the time that he himself has committed suicide. Thereafter he behaves as if he were dead, remains motionless, with eyes shut and must be nourished by force.

What is the explanation of this psychopathic phenomenon? In his answer, the Chief Doctor of the asylum excludes the motive of jealousy and accepts the act of suicide as psychologically plausible on the grounds that it liberates the patient from the entanglements of an unbearable existence. By shooting the stranger Oliver destroys the duality of the life he led, the duplicity of dream and reality and passes into a state of uninterrupted dream.

Some incidents in *"Zweimal Oliver"*, such as the scene in the restaurant in the company of a streetwoman and Oliver's reckless flinging away of large sums of money, to mention only concrete instances, are strongly reminiscent of the drama *"Von Morgens bis Mitternachts"*. But whereas Oliver escapes from the tragedy of life into a state of unreality, the Cashier in *"Von Morgens bis Mitternachts"* escapes from dire realities into a *course of crime and adventure* leading him into entanglements from which nothing can save him but death.

If Kaiser's technique has been called cinematographic, no other play could have been thus characterized more aptly than this. Things move at a swift pace, scenes change, events are flashed across the stage in a steadily changing panorama, dramatic, poignant, tense with concentration.

The play's central figure, the Cashier, is a man of crippled spirit, condemned to the existence of changeless routine, a human counting machine. His impulses are throttled into unrevolting submission, his dreams starved into lethargy. Through his hands pass countless thousands, tokens of power, symbols of unlimited opportunities of living, of adventure, joy, possession, the life-blood of modern society—money. But his relation to this wealth is no more than that of a vessel through which flows the richest wine, no more than that of a wire which conducts the vibrations of voices of romance and adventure. Gray sameness, insensate, mortifying.

Until the moment of awakening comes. Something that was constrained and frozen within him, bursts and opens up. The flame flares up, envelops his entire being, inextinguishable, menacing, reckless. What has happened? Seemingly nothing significant: a foreign lady comes to claim some money and fires his imagination. The rustle of silks, the sweet scent of perfumes, a suggestion of exoticism . . . What can that mean to a little clerk, a dutiful bank-teller, a proper family-man? Yet it is enough. It is no less than the frail flame of a fuse burning down to the end of its course and touching off an explosive. It is sufficient to destroy all bridges behind him, to release his pent-up energies on a blind and reckless course. Unhesitating, he gathers up the bank's cash which is to him a veritable fortune, and rushes to the lady's hotel to get the first taste of the power of money, to precipitate his starved soul into a course of adventure which is to him, for the moment, woman. But already the first step is to bring disappointment, the first in a long series of disillusionments. To him—the rebellious creature of impulse —imagination is commensurate with reality. And being incapable of reasoning, he is not prepared for alternatives. That is why he clashes headlong against the wall of impossibilities. The lady is not purchasable. His madness is without system, consequently infinitely ridiculous, tragically foolish. The lady he was sure of winning with money is the respectable mother of a mature son, and so the power of money fails in its first test.

But the avalanche has begun rolling and nothing can stop its

gathering impetus. From one etappe of adventure to another, in a weird and desperate way, reminiscent of Faust, he seeks to experience, to drink of the cup of life, in search of the philosopher's stone. Squandering money regardlessly, he hurries in a brief space of time through all that life offers, vaguely sensing that for him there is no return and no deferment, that he is bound for the inevitable end soon to come. Yet he remains intent upon experiencing all of life in a concentrated measure—from morn to midnight.

The characters surrounding the Cashier fade into the distance and thus cause the one important figure to loom so much more prominently in the foreground. *"Von Morgens"*, like O'Neill's *"Emperor Jones"* is a monodrama. Kaiser deprives everything of its spiritual significance with the exception of the Cashier who dominates each scene, each etappe of adventure, and who at last commits suicide after the deepest disappointments and the Judas-like betrayal by the girl who seemed to him to be the solitary stronghold of faith. And as he dies, the symbol of Christ-like martydrom is lent to his figure through the scarcely audible whisper: "Ecce homo".

In this play, of episodic structure, are foreshadowed the graver social problems which Kaiser treats in his social cycle. It represents the first stage of development in Kaiser's human problem: *the awakening of man to the realization of a frustrated existence and the desire for self-realization.* And although the Cashier, like Krehler in *"Kanzlist Krehler"*, sees the problem still purely as a personal one and attempts a personal solution which is bound to meet with defeat, the Cashier goes through a much more significant series of experiences which forecast the trend of Kaiser's social interests.

"Kanzlist Krehler" like *"Zweimal Oliver"* and *"Von Morgens bis Mitternachts"* is a play of individualism. Krehler likewise knows only himself. The world is to him merely material and space for his desires. And all three represent the tragedy of an unfulfilled life. All-too-late in an existence of dull routine without surcease, in a brief hour during which the rotation of

the wheel of monotony halts, the sense of drab futility dawns upon the middle-aged clerk Krehler.

On a Monday, because of a generous impulse on the part of his superior, he finds himself free of duties for the day. Free . . . He walks the streets in a daze, unable to comprehend the life around him, a stranger to the very commonest occurrences of every-day existence. The least insignificant observation appears to him pregnant with a strange importance, each act and gesture represent a form of experience from which he had been completely excluded during all the preceding Mondays of his life, year after year. Life for him had narrowed down to the one activity to which he had been chained, the infinite expanse of the globe had shrunk to the proportions of a little space between four walls. Life was crippled to the stifling sameness of way to office, way home at noon, way to office, way home at eve.

And all to what end? To what end? A stranger to the streets of his city, to his very house which he recognizes only with difficulty, he asks himself this question while entering his home, the home which is now so strange to him in its disorder.

And with sudden resolve, Krehler abandons his position, prepares to sever the ties which have held him enslaved to a life that was no life. In his sudden fanatical, sadistic outburst of hate for his wife he finds a temporary outlet for his accumulated, intense resentment towards life itself. The globe he purchases with his last money is a symbol of his longing for the unattained realization of a richer life, and its destruction—a symbol of his renunciation of the hope of ever attaining it.

Like the Cashier's, his first spasmodic flight into the realm of unattained dreams is weighed down with futility. Wing-seared, disillusioned—what way of escape and peace remains to him save the way of death? But unlike the Cashier who is profounder in his conception and the sense of tragedy, Krehler who borders on the neurotic, perverted type and bears a close resemblance to King Marke in *"König Hahnrei"*, drags to the grave with him the innocent young Max. It is an act of vengeance. Not vengeance against Max as an individual, but vengeance against life, blind and indiscriminate, the vengeance of a lunatic.

For Krehler is a man possessed. The late-awakened longings sweep him off his feet with the tremendous impetus of a long-suppressed outburst. In his desperate urge for self-realization, he loses his sense of balance, becomes the slave of a fanatical idea. Man of impulse that he is, he—like the Cashier—cannot submit to dictates of reason. Once stirred out of the stupor of his mechanical existence, he can no longer compromise, suppress revolt, acquiesce. His family whom he plunges into a state of unhappiness, Max whom he pushes to his death are only victims of a victim, of one who learned too late and who was too weak to bear the cross knowingly, and too blind to see his way into a new life.

It is this fatal incapacity for compromise and submission, despite death and misery, the crazy self-destructive rage which consumes him and his nearest, that makes Krehler the tragic figure he is. And because the passion in his heart is disproportionate to the power of his reason, much that he does must needs appear to be ludicrous, ludicrous in the sense of being aimless, pointless, much as the temper of a child that vents itself upon the nearest object, lacking the understanding of cause and effect.

Thus we see these characters resorting to the *last refuge of the romantic temperament* that is unable to compromise with life —*death,* Not only Krehler and the Cashier find their last escape in death. It is also the last refuge of Karla in *"Die Versuchung"*, of Sylvette in *"Der Brand im Opernhaus"*, of Oliver in a symbolical sense, of the Field-Commander in *"Die Lederköpfe"*, of the Pawnbroker in *"Nebeneinander"*, of the Millionaire in *"Koralle"*, the Millionaire-worker in *"Gas II"*, of Doris Thompson in *"Mississipi"*, of Aldo and the unnamed hero of the novel *"Es ist genug"*. It is because they see the need for a new life, but do not know the road to it or because they lack the strength to struggle against the obstacles on the road to a new life, that death becomes to them the only solution.

But the sense of defeat which actuates these characters, is not Kaiser's final attitude. Far from ultimate pessimism, he has created a series of characters in whom revolt against existing

conditions is coupled with faith in the betterment of humanity or at least the willingness to attempt its reformation.

In *"Der gerettete Alkibiades"* Sokrates in his coldly rationalistic fashion sees the hope for a new humanity in the development of a harmonious human type which would embody the two principles represented in him and in Alkibiades, that of the *perfect mind* and the *perfect body.* And he finds an enthusiastic fighter for this idea in Alkibiades himself.

To be sure, the emphasis of *"Alkibiades"* lies in its form rather than its ethical content. If one should wish to characterize this play in relation to its author, it might be possible to say that *"Alkibiades"* is to Kaiser's dramaturgy what *"Miss Sarah Sampson"* was to Lessing's, an illustration of what according to the author drama should be.

"Alkibiades" is first and foremost elegantly polished dialectic; its argumentative logic is masterful; its dialogue has the crystal clarity of a Platonic dialogue; its wit has a sharp and exact sting. But at the same time it is excellent character drama. Socrates becomes a living, working, thinking reality amidst the great and the trifling events of existence, whether he is portrayed in the fish-market or in the scene of his death.

The principle of intellect wages its war against the supremacy of the physical in a purely dialectic style. Sokrates, the disfigured, round-backed, ugly specimen, the last man in his platoon, the joke of the fish-hucksters is set up against the perfect Alkibiades, the beautiful and adored national idol. But through his conversion of Alkibiades to an appreciation of his sardonic sally at the vainglory of physical valor and of the glamor of war which is *"a game of arms and legs"*, Sokrates saves Alkibiades.

In the play, *"Nebeneinander"* we find a typical presentation of Kaiser's new ethical ideas. And typical is also the dialectic approach to the subject. On the one hand there is the negative morality of society, illustrated both by its negatively callous institutions and the practically immoral individuals, the criminals by omission; on the other hand the figures of the Pawnbroker, the luminous figure of the utterly selfless ludicrous fool, the New Man and his daughter.

As the Cashier in *"Von Morgens"* and Kanzlist Krehler are brothers in the awakening stage of the individual to the realization of his frustrated life, so is the Pawnbroker the brother of Spazierer in *"Hölle, Weg, Erde"* in the instinctive awakening of their love for humanity, in their revolt against the congealed, pulseless, immovable moral code of present-day society. But what to the Pawnbroker, tragi-comic victim of his impulse, is still instinct just as much as to the successful world reformer, the symbolical Spazierer, becomes transplanted to an intellectual, conscious sphere of idealism in such types as the Millionaire's son in *"Gas I"*, the Captain in *"Gats"*, Eustache in *"Die Bürger von Calais"*.

In *"Nebeneinander"* the Pawnbroker accidentally learns that the life of an unknown person, a young girl, depends on a letter which her lover had forgotten in the pawned coat and from which the address has been obliterated. He attempts to enlist the aid of individuals and institutions, but is callously repulsed. He learns that the world is not interested in the life or welfare of an obscure individual, and that society acts on that principle in a logical though heartless manner. When at last he discovers that there is a legal logic, but no inner logic of events, no absolute justice, but a chaotic state of 'nebeneinander', he concludes that there is no further purpose for his life and takes gas together with his daughter.

In *"Nebeneinander"* Kaiser presents a vivid contrast between the atrophied morality of contemporary society as especially reflected in its judicial system, and the ethics of love and self-sacrifice and a positive recognition of everyone's moral obligation to his fellow-being, the precept that every individual is his brother's keeper. Likewise striking is his antithesis of police guilt and the sense of guilt possessed by the tender conscience. The very nature of the grotesquely exaggerated situations serves to project upon the screen the looming issues and to bring out the author's bitter irony which is deftly expressed in the very title. For side by side with the Pawnbroker's frantic efforts to save the life of a girl he had never seen which precipitates him on a course of personal sacrifice and public abuse and leads to ultimate self-

destruction, the girl whom he sets out to rescue with so much self-abnegation and disinterested love, marries happily and forgets her threat to commit suicide while her seducer climbs up the ladder of material success through all kinds of criminal ventures. One is reminded of Wedekind's ironical exclamation: "So ist das Leben."

Is the Pawnbroker merely an impractical idealist, the fool for whom he would be taken by the society which repels him and against which he butts as against a wall? Is he a comic character? It lies in the very nature of Kaiser's expressionistic method of emphasizing certain truths by means of distorting exaggerations to lend a touch of the ludicrous to certain essentially grave characters and situations. In that sense we can conceive of Krehler as comical, not to speak of Nehrkorn in *"Der Geist der Antike"* and others. But a deeper reading of the play cannot but impress upon us the tragic seriousness in which this play was conceived. Although the Pawnbroker's actions seem to be purely impulsive and unreasoning, he is none the less conscious of the philosophy which impels his actions, for he expresses it very beautifully when he says that to have lived to serve and to have loved, was not to live in vain, though the road be strewn with disillusionments and frustration and though it led to a fatal conclusion.

Sokrates' sarcastic condemnation of military glory becomes bitter denunciation of the war-spectre in *"Die Lederköpfe"*. War's beastliness and human degradation is effectively symbolized in the distorted features of the Field Commander. *"Die Lederköpfe"* and *"Die Bürger von Calais"* present the two aspects of the problem of war, its negative and positive sides. What the former undertakes to demonstrate as the great crime of humanity, the latter already assumes as an evident premise upon which Eustache de Saint Pierre and his associates build their wise and human conclusion.

The brutality of war, its senseless outrages, its daemoniac powers for evil, the vanity and animality of its ambition, its falsehood and treachery are displayed in incident after incident as the play progresses. The senile City Commander lavishing endless care

upon his own bodily comfort, is the typical ruthless general who expects endless sacrifice and patient suffering from his subordinates and orders them to be lashed to death for the refusal to expose themselves to misery and death. The Field Commander, for the sake of military and private ambition, does not hesitate to destroy the very image of his face, to pierce his eye, to scalp his head, to mutilate feature after feature to hurrifying distortion, into a leather-head, a leather-mask with a narrow slit for eye and mouth. Basileus, blind to everything except his bloodthirsty military ambition and his inhuman code of martial honor, is ready to sell his daughter to the monstrous leather-mask, poisons his faithless City Commander, issues orders to mutilate the faces of a whole troop which dared to mutiny.

Is the individual to blame? People who "vor Blut in den Augen nichts sehen als Blut?" No. It is the general attitude of mind which makes war possible, which feeds the mind upon codes of ambition and honor that are false and perilous. As the Troop Commander says to the revolting soldiers when they contemplate lashing the City Commander to death:

"Was gilt euch noch der Stadthauptmann? Beendet den Krieg! Geht in euere Häuser und sammelt die Geräte, die Felder pflügen. Sorgt euch ums Brot, das euren Kindern und Frauen nicht mehr wuchs. Die Waffen habt ihr weggeworfen—legt auch die Peitschen nieder."

The dialectic wrangling of these two attitudes of peace and war animates every stage of the drama. Lined up against Basileus, the City Commander and the earlier Field Commander is the group of the new people, the revolting troop and its commander, Basileus' daughter, the later Field Commander.

Of the secret of his power Basileus says himself:

"Die Taubheit bringt die Macht. Ich bin mächtig, wenn ich die Ohren vor allen Stimmen verschliesse, die aus der Tiefe hallen. Wer ruft da unten? Ich gebiete Stille. Man duckt sich schweigend. Wagt wer Widerrede? Ich töte ihm den Hauch im Mund. Dem einzelnen—den vielen, die in Städten wohnen—dem Volk in Ländern—über alle Erde zieh ich den Mantel meiner Macht, der Luft erstickt, die ich allein in meinen Lungen atme. Die Macht ist Leben."

Man is less than the dust to him:

"Habt ihr Gesichter? Ich sehe sie nicht an. Ihr seid der Schwarm, der zwischen meinen Knieen wimmelt. Ein Menschenheerwurm, der mit Millionen Füssen schlürft—dicht überm Boden—und das Kraut im Staube frisst. Das wälzt sich alles unter mir—ich unterscheide Augen, Mund und Nase nicht—wie du nicht Mund und Augen und eine Nase hast. Du bist ein Lederkopf. Da wird es deutlich. Verlöscht ist das Gesicht. Warum soll es sich zeigen? Will ich euch kennen? Erhebt ihr Anspruch auf Bezeichnung? Ihr sollt euch selbst nicht kennen. Seid jedermann und niemand, die ihr wart und bleibt—mit Lederköpfen."

Against the spirit of this dehumanizing mutilation the daughter of Basileus protests:

"Fürchterlicher als deine Verstümmelung entstellt dich deine Gier, mit der du deinen Rang vor anderen suchtest!"

And again:

"Mit Ueberlegung hast du dich des Gesichts beraubt. Du bist kein Mensch mehr, du bist ein Tier, das frisst und brüllt."

But she does not only protest. She leads the Field Commander on to revolt against the brute forces of destruction, to save the troop of mutineers from the fate which he had brought on himself. The humanity of this act, she tells him, would beautify the very mask to which he was condemned.

"Mit neuer Bildung dringt es durch—es strahlt von Licht. In Blendung schliesse ich die Augen—und sehe dich; wie du die Macht zerschlägst, die mit Zerstörung herrscht!"

And when the truth finally dawns upon the Field Commander, he becomes the savior of the condemned troop. At its head he returns to lash Basileus to death. But this very recognition makes it impossible for him to continue living and so he walks into Basileus' dagger in order to seek his own liberation in death.

Whereas *"Die Lederköpfe"* attempts the treatment of modern problems in the guise of a remote age, the plays that will follow have our own time for their background. The trilogy *"Koralle"*, *"Gas I"* and *"Gas II"* is held together by means of an inner

connection. It runs its course through three generations, father, son, grandson. In *"Koralle"*, the Millionaire who grew up in poverty, has seized power as a means of saving his children from the dire lot that had been his. All his hopes are vested in his son who is to succeed him. The latter who has been sailing the world is about to return. The Millionaire's chagrin, however, is boundless when the young sheltered man arrives, of his own choice, as a stoker on a freight vessel. With an ironical twist of fate, the son of the Millionaire who escaped from poverty, is himself fleeing—from riches. He has come in contact with the misery of the world and has been touched by it. On his journey understanding had come to him, the understanding of the cosmic bond of humanity that springs from love, the understanding that he too must suffer, endure the hardships and the misery that is mankind's:

"Wie Schuppen ist es mir von den Augen gefallen. Das ganze Unrecht, das wir begehen, wurde mir offenbar. Wir Reichen—und die andern, die erstickten in Qualm und Qual—und Menschen sind, wie wir. Mit keinem Funken Recht dürfen wir das—weshalb tun wir es? Ich frage Dich, warum? Sag mir eine Antwort, die Dich und mich entschuldigt."

With the vividness of an awakened conscience the son sees the appaling contrast between rich and poor:

"Da am Kai liegt die 'Meeresfreiheit.' Bewimpelt, Musik. Auf Deck spazieren die Passagiere in hellen Kleidern, schwatzen, sind lustig. Wenige Meter tiefer die Hölle. Da verbrennen Menschen zuckenden Leibes in heissen Schächtern vor fauchenden Feuerlöchern. Damit wir eine schöne und flotte Fahrt haben . . ."

And not alone the Millionaire's son; also his daughter, under the influence of her brother's attitude, undergoes a similar metamorphosis. It dawns upon her suddenly; she sees the injustice of the world-system and resolves to devote herself to improving the lot of the miserable masses of humanity.

"Als ich meine Hände von der kochenden Brust des gelben Heizers aufhob, waren sie gezeichnet. Das Mal ist in meinem Blut bis zum Herzen zurückgesunken. Ich habe nicht mehr eine Wahl. Ich fühle die Bestimmung."

Yet this drama is not a tragedy of the working classes, but rather the tragedy of that nameless and nevertheless somehow realistic character, the Millionaire. In trying to escape the haunting fear of poverty, he had developed a faculty for acquiring millions, but in step with the growth of his fortune grew the inner distortion from which there was just one escape—one form of flight—into the quietude of non-existence. The pessimism and resignation of this romantic figure is expressed in his last speech:

"Was wird das beste? Nicht aufzutauchen und in den Sturm verschleppt zu werden, der an die Küsten fährt. Da brüllt Tumult und zerrt uns in die Raserei des Lebens. Angetriebene sind wir alle—Ausgetriebene von unserem Paradies der Stille. Losgebrochene Stücke vom dämmernden Korallenbaum—mit einer Wunde."

In vain one would look for a solution of the problems which the play stirs up. *"Die Koralle"* is still steeped in the romantic twilight of longing and flight from life. Yet in the figures of the son and the daughter the new generation begins to wrangle with existence, begins to seek for a new way, for an escape from existing conditions, but not into death, but into a new form of life.

While *"Koralle"* merely presents a social problem, but fails in the attempt to offer a solution, Kaiser seriously endeavors to suggest one in *"Gas"*, its sequel. The Millionaire's son is the central figure of *"Gas I"*. He has turned his father's factory into a cooperative enterprise in which the former wage-slaves have become shareholders and co-owners, while he himself merely retains the place of director and trustee. Yet in spite of this socialist reform, they are not free. They are slaves once more; slaves of the mechanistic age; slaves of gas production. Upon this gas all social and political hopes are based.

And then a monstrous thing happens: the gas explodes. What was the reason? The Chief Engineer investigates, but discovers no flaw in the formula. Matter has eluded the control of mind. What is the significance of this allegory? Industrialism, when brought to the extreme of work for work's sake and the craze

of production, can lead to nothing but an "explosion", to the destruction of man by matter.

The Millionaire's son recognizes this. And when he hears the pathetic outcries of the mothers, wives, brothers and sisters of the mutilated and dead in the explosion, their frantic lamentations, he says:

"Was ist die Explosion furchtbar? Was zerriss oder verbrannte sie? Zischte sie nach einem von euch—der nicht schon verstümmelt vor aller Explosion war? Mädchen—dein Bruder, war er heil? Mutter—dein Sohn, war er heil?—Frau—dein Mann, war er heil? War einer heil im Werk, das aufflog? Was richtete die Explosion für Verwüstungen an euch noch an? . . . Erschlagen wart ihr vor dem Einsturz—verwundet vor dem Einschlag . . . mit einem Fuss—mit einer Hand—mit heissen Augen im toten Kopf wart ihr vorher Krüppel! . . . Kann das der Ingenieur vergelten? . . . Kann eine Forderung das vergüten? . . . Fordert mehr . . . fordert mehr!"

Not the engineer whose punishment they demand, is guilty. The system is responsible. The system which subjects man to the machine and cripples his life. None of the victims was sound. The machine had maimed their lives long before the explosion. What must man demand? What is the solution? Man must demand himself, his own humanity:

". . . fordert euch!! . . . fordert euch!!! . . . Menschen seid ihr—im Sohn —im Bruder—im Mann! Fliessende Vielheit aus euch zu jedem um euch. Keiner ist Teil—in Gemeinschaft vollkommen der einzelne. Wie ein Leib ist das Ganze—und das ist ein Leib! . . . Sammelt euch aus der Zerstreuung—und aus der Verletzung heilt euch: . . . seid Menschen!! . . . Bruder—du bist Mensch. Deine Hand um den Hebel lähmt dich nicht mehr!—Sohn—du bist Mensch—deine Augen schweifen vom Sichtglas in Weite!—Mann—du bist Mensch—dein Tag ist Tag deiner Zeit, die du lebst!! . . . Raum ist euer—und Allheit im Raum, der euch beherbergt!—Ihr seid Menschen darin! Menschen—mit jedem Wunder bekannt—entschlossen zu jeder Erschliessung!—In euch braust der Himmer und flutet die Fläche mit Farbe der Gräser! . . . Ihr seid vollendet—von diesem Anfang an!—Menschen."

And he unfolds before them the dream of an idyllic settlement where man can live freely and happily:

"Menschen in Einheit und Fülle seid ihr morgen!—Triften von Breite

in Grüne sind neuer Bezirk! Ueber Schutt und Trümmer, die liegen, erstreckt sich die Siedlung. Ihr seid alle entlassen aus Fron und Gewinn! —Siedler mit kleinstem Anspruch—und letzter Entlohnung:—Menschen!!"

The Engineer, however, succeeds in swaying the masses to his side. They cannot resist the temptation of power and profit. Gas triumphs: its continued production is assured. "Fieber ist es in euch," says the Millionaire's son, "ein Taumel der Arbeit." For the last time he attempts to appeal to their humanity:

"Erschlagt nicht den Menschen!! . . . Macht keine Krüppel!! . . .Du Bruder bist mehr als eine Hand!! . . . Du Sohn bist mehr als Augen!! . . . Du Mann lebst mehr als einem Tag!! . . . Ewig und vollkommen seid ihr alle von Ursprung her . . . verstümmelt euch nicht in die Zeit und die Handreichung!! . . . Seid grösser begierig . . . nach euch . . .nach euch!!!!"

But the workers desert the hall, and then he exclaims in despair:

"Ich habe den Menschen gesehen—ich muss ihn vor sich selbst schützen!"

In the presence of his daughter he gives expression to his bitter doubts:

"Treibt der Strom nicht zu wüst und schwemmt es durch die Ufer, die es nicht halten? Lässt sich das Wehr nicht bauen, das die Flut staut? Hemmt sich nicht die Raserei und tritt ins Gefild aus und überwuchert mit Wachstum die Fläche in Grüne? Gibt es kein Halten? . . . Sage es mir: wo ist der Mensch? Wann tritt er auf—und ruft sich mit Namen—Mensch? Wann begreift er sich und schüttelt aus dem Geäst sein Erkennen? Wann besteht er den Fluch—und leistet die neue Schöpfung, die er verdarb . . . den Menschen? . . . Muss er nicht ankommen—morgen und morgen—und in stündlicher Frist? . . . Bin ich nicht Zeuge für ihn—und für seine Herkunft und Ankunft . . . ist er mir nicht bekannt mit starkem Gesicht? . . . Soll ich noch zweifeln?!!

And in reply, his daughter utters the significant words: "Ich will ihn gebären".

In *"Gas II"*, under the direction of the seven symbolical blue figures the gas plant is again producing its enormous output with unceasing energy. Upon it depends the outcome of the warfare

against the encroaching yellow enemy. Shift upon shift, the workers bend to the task, hand and foot and eye unrelenting.

The growing irregularity of output intensifies the tension of the watchers in the central station. The diminished output is of tremendous import. It spells approaching disaster. Divisional reports are increasingly disconcerting. The work lags behind schedule. The progress of the enemy is menacing. The directing blue figures call the Chief Engineer to task. What is the cause of the perilous let-down? His answer is:

"Uebermass von Dauer der einen Handlung stumpft den Ansporn aus Willen zu Werk. Gas ist nicht mehr Ziel—in kleine Handreichung verstiess sein Zweck, der wiederholt, was zwecklos wird im Teil ohne Ganzes. Planlos schafft der Mann am Werkzeug—das Werk entzog sich der Uebersicht, wie der Mann durch Tag und Tag tiefer ins gleichförmige Einerlei glitt."

A surprising explanation. No economic dissatisfaction, no practical difficulties. The cause is psychological. Man's nature is in revolt against the machine. The directors summon the Millionaire-worker. Let him inject new spirit into the weary workers. But he merely demands the release of the plant from compulsion. The pressure of the enemy does not relent. Meanwhile the work halts. No organized opposition is in evidence, no leadership is apparent. A strike is in progress. Still more, the workers seem ready for positive action.

The assembled mass demonstrates its will. Youths and maidens, men and women, old workers proclaim their human rights to enjoy the lives that are theirs. The Millionaire-worker exhorts them to carry out their original destinies, to become human beings out of automatons and slaves of industry.

He says: Escape from compulsion of toil to which you are harnessed like beasts of burden, send out your message of armistice, proclaim your humanity.

"Entlasst die Losung: Hände sind los von Verrichtung—Hände sind ab von Fron für Vernichtung—Hände sind frei für Druck aller Hände in unsern, die rasten: kein Gas!"

But no reply is flashed back in return. No spark of a message.

The yellow enemies overpower the defenseless mass. The workers are driven back to the works to produce gas for the yellow conquerors.

Once more decreased output sets in. Once more the work comes to a standstill, but this time under the instigation of the Chief Engineer. Revenge and power are the motives impelling him. In his possession is a ball of poison gas sufficient to destroy the enemy, to burn the bodies of the yellow forces to the very skeleton. And again he is confronted by the humanitarian Millionaire-worker in a struggle of principles. His words have the ring of the great Eustache de Saint Pierre. Not of this world is the kingdom of heaven. Be not destroyers of work. Be patient sufferers. Build the kingdom that is to come.

No longer does he believe in practical solutions. No longer does he think well of a return to nature, of peaceful settlement on land. The realm to be built is the realm of the spirit.

"Jetzt erfüllt sich in euch Wagnis durch Geschlechter und Geschlechter. Uber Triften von Grüne lockte euch einer vor mir—ihr verwiest ihn recht. Nichts um euch schont in euch das Beträchtliche—es hürdet sich nicht in Geviert von Siedlung und Siedlung . . . nicht von dieser Welt ist das Reich!!!!"

Thus the Millionaire-worker has despaired of a practical solution. His is the principle of a *passive escape into spirituality,* the *Neo-Christian mysticism* of suffering, of martyrdom as opposed to the positivistic slogans of the Chief Engineer with whom he battles in a mortally tense dialectic of speeches:

Chief Engineer: "Messt, wer ihr bleibt—in eurer Entrechtung. Nacken für Peitsche . . . Schicht für Schändung . . . Koppel von Vieh, das missbraucht ist. Ohne Schluss schleicht eure Mühsal . . . Bis in Niederbruch eurer Knöchel foltert euch Züchtigung."

And again:

"Rechnet die Mächtigkeit aus, die ihr erbeutet. Euer wird Werk und Gewinn . . ."

And against the Engineer's call of "Errichtet die Herrschaft" rises that of the Millionaire-worker "Gründet das Reich!"

But the mass is not ready to follow the call of the Millionaire-worker. Already a few advance to seize the ball of poison-gas to destroy the enemy, but they are preceded by the Millionaire-worker who himself drops the ball and starts the terrible work of self-destruction. For now he has completely despaired of humanity:

"Meines Blutes Blut schlug nach Verwandlung von uns!! Mein Eifer tränkte sich mit Eifer von Mutter und Muttervater!! Unsre Stimme konnte die Wüste wecken—der Mensch ertaubte vor ihr!! Ich bin gerechtfertigt!! Ich kann vollenden!!"

Chaos yawns. The yellow forces shoot against each other in self-destruction.

The thought of an idyllic settlement which had been the dream of the Millionaire's son in *"Gas I"* is echoed once more in the play *"Gats"*.

Though *"Gats"* presents more directly the problem of over-population and seems to advocate as an Utopian solution the general adoption of birth-control to regulate the increase of population within the boundaries of a definite scheme of social absorption, the problem is too crudely sociological in its scope to merit the place of a main thesis in a work by such an able and subtle dramatist as Kaiser is.

To him the philosophical aspect is of supreme importance, the sociological being treated merely as dramatic material. No dramatist wary of his artistic reputation, can permit himself to become a reformer by proposing definite social solutions. He must, to save himself, retain a measure of mental reserve, suspend judgment. To become a dogmatic believer in a particular theory, is to stop having an open mind, to consider the necessary relativity of all that is human, means to cease to understand life in its fulness. Kaiser knows how to guard himself against this danger of artistic stagnation.

What, therefore, is the philosophical problem of *"Gats"*? Just this, that the solution of social evils, poverty, unemployment, ruthless class-struggle, war, etc., the various ills of a maladjusted growth of population—common knowledge of all

informed persons since Malthus—lies not in *social* legislation, but . . . well, "Gats" does not take us so far. It leads us only to the recognition of the *pessimistic aspect of the social solution,* leaving the other face of the coin as yet unrevealed. What troubles Kaiser, is this: A great social ill can find its cure in a relatively simple method of adjustment, if the cure can be administered to the ailing body. But can it be administered?

The Captain in *"Gats"* starts out with the credulous hypothesis that it can. Like the other representatives of Kaiser's New Humanity he is an optimist and a believer. Therein lies his missionary faith—in the first stage. But before long he discovers that the problem is not quite so simple as the logical steps of diagnosis, remedy, affected cure—would seem to indicate. For the middle step proves impossible. The patient, like a refractory child, will rather ail or perish if necessary than take the bitter medicine. It works out literally in accordance with this simple formula. The Controllers, the anonymous speakers from the arena are merely voices of the mass, of that mass of which Nietzsche was so deeply suspicious and which the Captain later abhors in his despair.

As in *"Gas"*, the stubborn mass is swayed by demagogues to the side of the opposition characterized by superstition and reaction; to the faction of all who are motivated by instinct and desire rather than by method and reason; by the immediate rather than the paramount; by the tangible; the golden rule of the line of least resistance. It is the same old story. Tragedy arising from stupidity. Reason and light lose in the struggle against the forces of darkness whose strangle-hold on the masses remains unbreakable.

The condemnation of modern civilization which was given specially poignant utterance by the Millionaire's son in *"Gas I"* is given the American background in the play *"Mississipi"*.

In the Mississippi valley, above New Orleans, a community of farmers has developed a strange cult. It is tinged with religious fanaticism and moral righteousness, with extreme asceticism and self-denial which are used as a means of economic sabotage. In its desire for world-reform and the redemption of

mankind, it is yet directly anti-social, consciously destructive; it uses methods of anarchy yet without its political shibboleths.

Against what does this small dangerous fanatical group direct its protest? Against the enslaving of mankind to the gluttonous god of commerce, against a world which views every form of life from the standpoint of a commodity, and values it according to its marketing possibility; against a system in which greed for greater material possessions becomes the dominating urge and the impulse of all action.

Kehoe says:

"So sieht das Antlitz unsrer Erde aus, aus der ihr ein Geschäft gemacht habt. Es ist der Halm vom Acker eure Ware—es ist der Baum aus dem Walde eure Ware—es ist das Vieh von der Weide eure Ware—es ist das Erz aus den Schächten eure Ware—es ist der Schweiss aus den Poren eure Ware—es ist das Blut aus dem Herzen eure Ware—mit dem Fluch des Vorteils beladen, der alles entwertet hat."

They propose to accomplish their aim with divine aid, but not without taking an active part in the reformation of the world. Through a form of passive resistance: the abstention from increasing marketable products beyond the necessary minimum of bare sustenance; through furthering the forces of Nature in the task of destroying the existing conditions, symbolized by the city of New Orleans. To that end the dam of the Mississippi is reinforced so that it may carry the swelling torrents with undiminished fury on to New Orleans, the seat of the mighty, the modern slave-holders, and so that they may erase it from the face of the world.

It is an unholy idealism, unmitigated in its righteous wrath, an idealism in the spirit of a god of vengeance. It shrinks from nothing. Life is sacrificed to it with grim recognition of inevitability. There is not a note of regret in Kehoe's sorrow over the death of his son Phil. It is the same blind and unqualified patriarchal obedience to the voice of God that animated Abraham. Neither does Kehoe have any scruples of conscience when he contemplates shooting the lone soldier who is left to fire the explosives at the dam.

Through the betrayal of Doris Thompson, Kehoe's former wife, the dire plans of the conspiring fanatics are ascertained, the community forcibly evacuated, and Kehoe himself fatally shot as he makes the last desperate attempt to prevent the explosion of the dam.

But even in death and failure, Kehoe triumphs. His companions Isham and Flynn have gone forth to spread the gospel of their particular doctrine, and more than that, Doris has returned to him in contrition, finally grasping the truth for which Kehoe stood and for which he is dying. She too is willing to die with him in the onrushing floods of the Mississippi in a union no force will sever.

In *"Hölle, Weg, Erde"*, the artist Spazierer has received a telegram from someone virtually unknown to him to procure a thousand marks for him which would save his life. Spazierer appeals to Lili, a rich young lady who has acquired some of his work, to buy his other paintings so that he may be in a position to save a man's life. Lili has just ordered earrings for a larger sum, but she and her companion Edith laugh at the proposal to donate the money to an unknown person.

Spazierer argues that the very knowledge of the situation entails responsibility, but Lili counsels him not to take the misfortune of another too seriously. Thus the groundwork of the plot is laid, the problem of ethical responsibility stated in a few concise words. The New Man voluntarily assumes responsibility, the fate of his fellow-man becomes his vital concern. Every man is the keeper of his brother. Against him rises the bulwark of a hostile and indifferent society. Rather than give up her trinkets, Lili will suffer a human being in distress to die. Without compunction of conscience. And so the problem is stated even more bluntly and poignantly than in *"Nebeneinander"*.

And like the Pawnbroker, Spazierer starts out on a round of combats against the various fortresses of social indifference, a valiant knight errant in a fool's cap. The individual has failed him. He appeals to organized society. He goes to the police, accuses Lili and Edith of murder, intentional and conscious murder. What are the circumstances, the police officer inquires,

and upon receiving the explanation, he states, "Keiner tötet, der nicht Hand anlegt oder anstiftet".

This, briefly, is the epitome of the state's negative moral attitude, the attitude of indifferentism. It is a process of mechanical, impersonal, petrified justice which expresses itself characteristically in the rigid, mechanical, impersonal idiom of the official. A bloodless judicial system. Mock-justice.

Still undaunted, Spazierer visits the Attorney, the public defender. The latter is interested only in facts of the written law. Beyond that nothing exists. He cannot prosecute the ladies; the accusation is legally unfounded. And when Spazierer exclaims frantically:

"Hrr Anwalt—under den Gesetzen—in Ihren Büchern aller Gesetze—in Ihrer Bibliothek von Gesetzbüchern muss das Gesetz sein. Mein Gesetz!"

the reply is: "Es existiert keins". Then he defines his position: "Ich bin Automat, der die vorhandenen Gesetze anwendet". Against this Spazierer advances his conception of justice: "Recht muss . . . stündlich neu erfunden werden".

A new relation to justice will have to be created, a conception of justice which will place the responsibility where it belongs. It will be free of the fetters of frozen codes of law. The day of true justice will displace jurisprudence. The guilty will be recognized then, the millions of guilty. None will be exempt. The process of cleansing society will commence.

Spazierer stands before the show window of the jeweler from whom the earrings were bought. In its display he sees the source of all the evil. Glittering jewelry, trinkets, gold. The things money buys. The force of money. The disease of civilization. Money murders. The seduction of gold is at the root of the evil. One must strike at the source of temptation. He enters, stabs the jeweler and escapes.

"Weg" is the point of departure from the scheme of *"Nebeneinander"*. Thus far events were analogous. The New Man is butting head forward against a wall of impenetrable opposition. But now a miraculous transformation is in process of crystallization. It is, to be sure, as the critics have pointed

out, wholly unmotivated, purely a fiction of the brain, a step in the logic of Kaiser's theory, psychologically without foundation. But the theory is that once the germ of the new attitude has come in contact with the world, it will spread and infect all around irresistibly. Since man is good by nature, he is ready for moral regeneration and only waiting to be stimulated, to be awakened by a Messiah-Spazierer. We witness this moral awakening in scene after scene. All are subjected by or rather infected with it, the escaped prisoner and the street-woman, who return to prison of their own volition to seek inner freedom in seclusion from society; the jeweler who suddenly gains insight into truth; the attorney who becomes engrossed in the deeper aspect and meaning of justice; the police-officer who sends out his men to gather everybody in the market-place for the judgment of the Messiah—Spazierer. Humanity is ripe for the moral reawakening. Humanity is ripe to be reborn.

Whither does Spazierer lead the congregated people? The name of the third section, *"Erde"* yields the answer in a word. Regenerated man will find his heaven on earth. The fantastic extravaganza thus proves to have a foundation of realism. Man's resurrection is bound to earth. The religion of the New Man does not gaze heavenward. Spazierer's message to his followers is: "Baut die Schöpfung"! It runs through the last pages of the play like a refrain, impressing its message: "Baut eure neue Schöpfung"! "Weit reicht eure Schöpfung"! " . . . ihr seid die Erde"!!

The love of fellow-man which animates Spazierer, manifests itself again in a rich and restrained quality in the play *"Noli me tangere"*. *"Noli"* is a play without a plot, a prison scene tense with the atmosphere of chained existence, throbbing with the slow, brutal, bruised impulses of life; an almost inarticulate mood, expressing the conflicts of love and treason, hunger, the vague rumbling call of sex, hope, despair, grim self-seeking and selfless sacrifice. Its nameless characters are moving human shadows within the sombre dark space of a prison-cell, extremes of typification. Yet their muffled cryptic speech is a reverberation of the large world without, echoing its passions and dreams;

its endless seeking for the ego, "die grenzenlose Sucht zum Ich", its revolt against the rigor of dehumanizing processes of justice and the degradation of man the creator:

"Was verletzt Strenge von Recht zu solcher Vernichtung? Wer zerschlägt mit dem Vorwand von Pflicht zu dieser Zertrümmerung?"

"Wer vorsagt, was ohne Rede von ihm dumpf—wer vorbildet, was ohne Form von ihm stumpf: wer Chaos ballt in Figur und Zeichen aufrichtet von Steile—den Schöpfer von unwiederholbarer Leistung zerstampfen?"

It reiterates its belief in the eternity of life of which man is just a brief incident; it utters its credo in the humanity of the to-morrow:

"Der Rausch des Vorläufers sintert in meinem Blut verdoppelnd mich in mir."

". . . was mir geschieht—hier—bis zur leiblichen Misshandlung durch Fessel—es zerstört Vergängliches . . ."

"Ich bin grosse Stimme, die aushallt in Zeit, die weit dämmert—und Morgen in Zukunft rot macht!"

The unmistakable symbolism of Christ's betrayal by Judas Iscariot is carried out through the figures of the sixteenth and fifth prisoners. Goaded on by beastly hunger, No. 5 reveals to the jailer 16's gift of his cloak to the fifteenth prisoner—a suggestion of Paulus—liberated to go out into the world, while 16 is led away to suffer martydom.

Amidst degradation, 16, surrounded with an aureola of light, his palms displaying gaping wounds, holds up the torch of love and humanity. Out of the gloom hope gleams eternal for human salvation. Even in the betrayer there is still a spark of conscience which, aroused by the third prisoner's accusation, flares up into desperate remorse from which he can free himself in death alone. And so even he displays a touch of the humanity and purity which characterizes the Savior figure, a purity which will not be sullied by whatever is sombre and ugly in life, which will forbid the touch of an irreverent hand with the clarion call of "Noli me tangere"!

The superb drama *"Die Bürger von Calais"* represents the ultimate of Kaiser's art both in style and in point of ideational

content. From the first pages the reader is struck by the majestic solemnity, the unbroken atmosphere of spiritual twilight which affects one like a rare and mystical symphony. The spirit of tragedy flows on—a deep river of molten silver. The scene is dominated by the overpowering, visionary spirit of Eustache de Saint Pierre, selfless, knowing, guiding the course of events with unyielding will-power and sapience. Overwhelming is his all-subjecting calm readiness for self-immolation.

The low rumbling of great, self-conscious spiritual forces mingles here and there with a motif of doubt, despair, individual grief and hope, upon which fall the sententious, death-weighted utterances of Eustache, the very clarity and serenity of which have the ring of a world beyond. Majestic in its conception, and reminiscent of Da Vinci's Last Supper is the scene of the last meeting of the seven citizens, their last symbolical meal, the repeated drawing of lots, the Christ-like figure of Eustache, the garb of humility, the self-effacing frame of mind of all, struggling heroically against the rising, secret, excruciating hope that perhaps there would be no necessity to die. Truly the twilight of gods.

Equally breath-taking is the scene in the market-place. The slowly rising tension, as one by one the six citizens of Calais assemble before the gathered citizenry for their last journey; the undulating waves of emotion, the painful suspense concerning Eustache, waning faith, distrust, disillusionment, mumbling resentment, bitterness; and then the sudden change as the dead body of Eustache is brought upon the scene, a sweep of transformed sentiment, lulled and subdued; the pale light of a tragic dawn; the prophetic figure of Eustache's blind old father—this is dramatic sculpture, the plastic spirit of tragic drama par excellence.

Even the love night of the brothers de Wissant with the daughters of Jean d'Aire is free of the lighter erotic note. It too is weighted with the presence of death, in the face of which it becomes a rite of sacrifice, a devotion, a higher love, sublimated by a supreme sense of duty, hallowed by sacrifice and death,

liberated from the purely carnal aspect of love, steeped in the music of a marche funèbre.

"Calais", which can justly expect to become one of the world's classics, is based on Froissart's chronicle of the siege of Calais by the English King Edward III, immortalized in Rodin's famed sculpture which was doubtless a source of inspiration for Kaiser. That an author selects his material to suit his particular philosophy of life, is a truism which requires no proof. That this was a particularly fortunate choice for Kaiser can be seen from the fact that he has put into this work all the mastery of form and poetic vision of which he is capable, and that he has consequently created a work as nearly without blemish as possible, a work which compelled even his most reserved critics to expressions of admiration and praise. Even the scenes in which Eustache wilfully delays the decision concerning the seventh citizen which have met with some unfavorable comment, seem to be no less forceful and necessary, when one considers the severity of ethical conception which animates Eustache. The "ordeal" is of necessity an ordeal of moral purification, of hardening the will-power in the fires of suffering. Moral purpose, in the Kantian sense, admits of no humanitarian motivation for the moral agent. What matters is the selfless interest. To Eustache who has already transcended the stage of personal susceptibility in the face of suffering, the task of elevating his brothers-in-sacrifice to the same high moral level, becomes an imperative. Thus to criticize the protracted ordeal, points to misapprehension in relation to the fundamental philosophy of duty which guides Eustache's actions.

The problem of the play is the voluntary assumption of ethical responsibility on the part of the individual, the affirmation of life, conceived as creative work which Eustache expresses in the words: "Euer grösstes Werk wird eure tiefste Pflicht". With this principle in mind, military defense and the military code of honor are deprived of their ethical justification. For the ultimate end of war is destruction and the ultimate aim of life is creative work. Consequently the friends of war are the irreconcilable enemies of life. The work of peace, the harbor, must prevail

against the futility of blood-shed. Amidst the general confusion, Eustache alone is certain of his purpose and he alone is unflinching in the transparent clarity of his conception of duty: "Die Tat ist Alles, nichts der Ruhm".

This is the chief tenet of the New Man, the thought that vaguely struggles for recognition throughout all of Kaiser's social plays and which emerges triumphant in *"Die Bürger von Calais"*. In this sense *"Calais"* becomes the crowning work of Kaiser's not only in regard to form and individual content, but also in regard to the entire stream of philosophic aim.

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NOTE:

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